

Travel nursing is not for everybody

Profession



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A travel nurse is a medical professional who travels to hospitals in multiple locations as and when needed. Even though the term consists “ nurse”, a travel nurse isn’t necessarily a nurse but can also be a professional from other healthcare positions like Doctors, dentists, physical and occupational therapists as well as speech therapists. The people working with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) organisation can be considered as Travel Nurses. An aspiring candidate must have a bachelor’s degree in nursing and procured a license as a Registered nurse (RN) by appearing for NCLEX.

A travel nurse faces numerous challenges on personal as well as professional levels. The various hardships on this career path define you, both as a medical practitioner and a person. Accepting a job as a traveling nurse requires a lot of thought and determination. Working in stable and familiar surroundings is easier. When everything and everyone is new and the spotlight falls on you, that is the decisive moment of your life. Following are some of the hurdles in this line of occupation:

Inconsistent and substantially low pay grade.

When occupying a salaried position, one can expect increment in their pay checks over a period of time. This is not the case for Travel Nurses. As their work is on an assignment to assignment basis, the pay varies largely depending on the location and work load. The only way for them to increase or at least maintain a certain base income is to gain as much experience as possible.

Continuous Relocation.

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Now, traveling and relocation might be fun and thrilling at first, but over a period of time everyone wishes to have a place they can call “ home”.

Adventure seeking enthusiasts usually cherish such opportunities but for those who like a routine based life, the constant travel can be very hectic. After completing an assignment in one destination, the nurses have to completely shift their schedule and lifestyle to adapt to the new city.

Unpredictability.

Hospitals generally hire travel nurses to fill-in for their regular staff. So, making a schedule is rather futile as the phone or pager can buzz at any time and you need to rush to the hospital. Everything is entirely new to you, the people, the place and at times even the work methods and guidelines. The conditions under which you need to work are never the same as each assignment takes you to a different atmosphere. Acclimating to the situation without panicking can be a task in itself. If you travel internationally to developing or under-developed countries where the hygiene is questionable, performing under such pressure can be gruelling. The nurses might need to work in high-risk zones causing exposure to air borne and blood borne pathogens, workplace harassment and violence and hazardous chemical waste.

Staying away from Family.

This can be one of the hardest thing to do. After spending most of your life close to your family and friends, bidding them farewell can be very difficult. The uncertainty regarding the duration of your assignment adds to the sadness.

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Effects on Mental Health.

Even though it might not seem so, but travel nursing is a high-risk, high-pressure and strenuous occupation. During the assignment, they may have to shoulder a heavy patient load and make many critical decisions within minutes to save lives. They also suffer from feelings of isolation.

Conclusion.

To summarize everything, the job of a travel nurse is filled with equal number of pros and cons that tend to cancel out each other. Whether to pursue a career in that field entirely depends on the determination, self-confidence and will power of the person. Half-hearted decisions and doubts will surely lead you down a dangerous and difficult path.