

1. Money
2. Material facilities—buildings, equipment, etc.
3. Ancillary staff
4. Rota and workload
5. Teaching and research
6. Experience.

One can examine the prospectus and conduct the interview (unobtrusively) with these headings in mind. In this way it is not difficult to find out about the first five. The question of money is a significant omission from Barley's paper. Allowing for inequalities before parity all income should be shared equally; once individual partners start pocketing cash payments the seeds of dispute are sown. I think it wise to be frank about money at the interview but to wait for the partners to bring the subject up first; they almost always will. It is common for all income to be shared except seniority awards. In which case most trainees that I know would insist on keeping their vocational training allowance.

Barley mentions the desirability of having accounts and agreements to hand; I would agree that it is nice to see them but hardly possible to interpret them at an interview; it should be possible to have copies sent to a serious applicant after the interview so that he can study them at his leisure and obtain his trainer's advice.

I am glad to see that a number of Graham's candidates brought up the subject of a retirement clause. Nothing is worse than a senior partner who goes on for ever. One never knows what *anno domini* may do to a brisk 40-year-old, or even to oneself.

I did not seriously consider joining a practice that did not have a trainee or was not interested in having one soon. Among excuses I heard were . . . "the practice is not big enough" and "the patients would not like it", and even "well, don't you think it's all a bit of a waste of time". Some practices may have felt threatened by a trainee.

If one is interested in research the prospective partners should be sounded out at the interview; research is an uphill struggle at the best of times and it will be even harder if you do not have your partners' co-operation (Hardman, 1971).

At an interview it is difficult to find out about the more nebulous concept of shared experience. Some partners do not even share the interview; one is taken round from partner to partner spending an hour or so with each. On a daily basis do they learn from each other, criticise each other's medicine and share their clinical problems? Hull suggests that the latter happens rarely. If one can stand the tension, a few days in the practice as a supernumerary or as a locum may tell all.

Two other points. Before an interview I looked up the partners in the *Medical Directory*; afterwards, once my mind was made up, I wrote and let them know immediately. This is only polite, and it will help them, and, if one says 'no' it should make no difference to the payment of your travelling expenses, but you cannot be sure.

Finally, if the right practice does not turn up it is worth considering the executive council vacancies. An attractive single-handed practice, with potential for expansion might be a better bet than an unsatisfactory partnership.

I am indebted to the kindness and hospitality shown by each and every practice I visited.

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 Graham, B. (1972). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **22**, 73-78.
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GENERAL PRACTITIONERS AND CONTRACEPTION

Sir,

In the December *Journal* you published a letter from us in which we stated that we had decided to prescribe the contraceptive Pill on National Health Service prescriptions to all our patients who requested it.

It has now been pointed out to us that we may have committed a breach of our contract of employment under the National Health Service. In view of this we have decided to revert to our original procedure of issuing private prescriptions, except in cases of medical need.

G. N. YATES
MURIEL YATES

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SPORTS INJURIES

Sir,

The Institute of Sports Medicine is endeavouring urgently to compile an authoritative medical guide on:

- (a) Common injuries in the more individual, combative or martial sports 'though not excluding outdoor pursuits;
- (b) Necessary safeguards against such injuries.

If any of your readers experienced in these matters would be kind enough to forward such information, the Institute would be immensely grateful.

P. SEBASTIAN
Honorary Secretary

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