

Retirees May Consider Non-clinical “Encore” Career



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If you're nearing retirement, your plans may not include the pursuit of a new career. However, that may not be a bad thing to consider, given that many seniors are living much longer and developing boredomitis. (According to the DSM IV, boredomitis is defined as progressive boredom from passive indulgence leading to excessive laziness, sleepiness, daydreaming, and inattentiveness as your brain atrophies from the lack of mental stimulation). To avoid boredomitis, you may want to consider investing some of your time in an encore career.

An encore career is work in the second half of life that combines continued income, greater meaning and social impact. These are often paid (or volunteer) positions in fields such as education, the environment, health care, government, and social services.

The term “encore career” was first made popular by Marc Freedman, the CEO of Civic Ventures in his book *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*.

Why work again?

Why should you consider an encore career? We've recently seen a number of articles discussing the fact that seniors are living longer and they're looking for ways to prevent boredom and to earn a little income.

Working can address both of those issues, but you may not want to work in a clinical setting and face the stress associated with patient care or medical administration. You also may wish to avoid the risk for malpractice suits, now that you're no longer in full-time practice. If you've always wanted to pursue a dream career, perhaps retirement will provide you with the means to run after some of your dreams.

Before you map out your plans for an encore career, consider some of the reasons why you'd like to pursue such an endeavor. Then, look for practical ways you can stay busy and contribute to the health care system. Make sure to brush up on your computer skills because you'll find most of these encore career opportunities online.

Do you need supplemental income?

The last few years have caused many soon-to- retire physicians to push back their retirement plans. They've seen their savings shrink, so they're maintaining employment to prepare for a comfortable retirement.

Perhaps an encore career can help you transition into retirement sooner. By finding some part-time teaching, writing, or consulting opportunities, you may have the ability to earn some income and retire. Maybe this is the perfect time to establish a new business, work as a contractor/freelancer, or find steady part-time employment in an area related to science or health care.

If you don't require any supplemental income, establish yourself as a volunteer who is willing to gain new skill sets and contribute to an organization. Look for non-profit groups, startup companies, and other local and national bodies that would be thrilled to tap into your knowledge, experience, and expertise.

Don't limit your search to health care groups because you may enjoy contributing to an organization that focuses on science, education, and social services.

Freelance jobs

There are a variety of ways to look for contract/freelance work. Several websites allow you to create a profile and advertise your services. Elance.com is one such website where you can find freelance opportunities by bidding on projects and writing simple proposals. FreelanceJobs.org, iFreelance.com, and Guru.com are other examples of websites where you can find freelance jobs.

Working as a freelancer allows you to maintain a flexible schedule. You may choose to work in the spring and fall months so that you can enjoy the summers and winters by



going on extended vacations. You may also choose to do a bit of work when you're traveling. This might be a perfect way to balance work and pleasure.

There are many freelancing opportunities that are out there, so identify your top strengths and your willingness to spend time working on activities. Remember that your clients have urgent deadlines, so you'll need to deliver your work on time. Make sure to communicate regularly with your clients so that you fully understand their expectations.

Helping startup companies

Startup companies come in all shapes and sizes. Some are bootstrapped with no external funding. Others may be backed with several millions of dollars of venture capital funding.

Community colleges may be interested in hiring you to teach students pursuing allied health professions. You may also find that business schools are looking for part-time professors to teach about health economics, health care systems, or health policy.

You'll probably find better luck pursuing some of those smaller startups that are not backed by venture capital or angel investment firms. These smaller companies may not have much financial equity at the beginning. They may not be looking for financial assistance, but they can probably use your contributions as "sweat equity." Sweat equity refers to contributions made by people who contribute their time and effort. So, you don't need to invest your retirement savings in a startup.

Rather, invest your free time and contribute some of your intellectual property so that a young company

can succeed. Those organizations that are focusing on the health care industry could use input from seasoned physicians who understand the critical issues that impact the health care system.

You can find startup companies by researching websites like Startuply.com. You may also want to reach out to your alumni network because there is a very high probability that some of the younger alumni are in the midst of starting new companies. Your college alumni network is a great way to get connected with these younger entrepreneurs so that you can offer your services.

Teaching and tutoring

Community colleges may be interested in hiring you to teach students pursuing allied health professions. You may also find that business schools are looking for part-time professors to teach about health economics, health care systems, or health policy. Of course, you can also volunteer as a clinical instructor for a medical school and spend time teaching medical students about physical exams.

You can find a variety of freelance writing projects that focus on covering medical specialty meetings. There are medical education companies that may also be looking for physicians to write educational needs assessments and grant proposals. Publishers, medical websites, and other medical communications organizations may be looking for physicians to review content and provide scientific oversight.

panies that may be willing to pay you for your expertise.

Enjoy a hobby

Over the years, I have spoken with a number of physicians who couldn't wait until retirement so that they could pursue some of their hobbies on a more "professional" level. Perhaps you never have the luxury to pursue photography or cooking.

Volunteering is a great way to give back to society.

If you're not particularly interested in formal teaching, you can also find or create opportunities for yourself by becoming a private tutor. Depending on where you live, there may be a number of students who would benefit from private instruction.

Perhaps you'd find fulfillment tutoring underprivileged children. You may find it more intellectually stimulating to tutor medical students who are having difficulty with their coursework or with passing USMLE Step 1.

You can advertise your tutoring services locally by visiting local coffee shops and posting ads on the bulletin boards. You can also advertise on tutor websites such as Tutor.com and TutorsTeach.com. You may also want to tutor for a private institution such as Kaplan, Sylvan Learning, or Princeton Review.

Writing and editing

Once you retire, you may find that you have plenty of time to write. Writing editorials for your specialty journal may not generate revenue, but it's a good way to boost your visibility and your marketability. You can also expand your writing "portfolio" by contributing content to high-visibility medical websites and blogs.

I know of a number of medical websites that would be happy to publish your content, so contact me if you're interested in some writing projects.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to give back to society. It's also a wonderful way to develop new skills, meet new people, and expand your social network. I know several retired physicians who are enjoying the fact that they can now spend so much time counseling homeless people about substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases.

When these physicians were in private practice, they often could not find enough time to discuss these important health issues with their patients. Now, they volunteer at local homeless shelters or other organizations that allow them to counsel and interact with individuals. VolunteerMatch.org is a great website to help you find local volunteering opportunities.

Get involved in your local AARP state or regional chapter and you may meet others who are working with organizations that could use your help. Many AARP chapters also organize volunteering events. These volunteering events could act as springboards to help you find com-

Given that you have a medical background, you might be able to launch a new career by blending your clinical expertise with a particular hobby. Some physicians have made some great careers this way. ChefMD is a physician who has a cooking show and writes books about healthy eating. Some physicians have blended their love for travel with a medical tourism business.

Get started

Some of you are probably wondering, "How will I ever find these types of opportunities?" Depending on where you live, you may be surrounded by opportunities. Others may have to find them or create them by marketing themselves to companies and organizations.

Don't forget the principles of intentional social networking. You must be willing to meet new people, introduce yourself, and express your willingness to work, even through you're now retired. Most people may assume that retired = not working. You'll have to convince them that even though you're retired, actively pursuing an encore career so that you don't get bored playing golf every day.

Finding an encore career can take a lot of work, so make sure you're prepared. Start by building a

website for yourself. Create a blog. Get some business cards and give those to everyone you know. Leverage your network of connections. Have an updated resume and make sure that it doesn't give away your age (there are strategies to do this.)

Prepare a list of references who can speak about your leadership skills, your creativity, your ability to work as a team player, your willingness to learn new skills, your ability to think outside of the box, your communication skills, your personality, etc. You'll also need to have a strong cover letter if you want to get noticed.

Before long, you'll start finding opportunities that may be right for you and you'll be on your way to establishing a successful encore career.



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