9 TIPS FOR RECRUITING THE PERFECT PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

BY AINE CRYTS
"It's important to pay close attention to personality and temperament. You want a physician assistant to be a people person and a patient person. [We] pay attention to patient satisfaction, to education, to patients, and to relational care. Thus, it's very important to me when I'm recruiting candidates that they have a personality that's friendly, welcoming, warm, supportive, and empathetic."

--Don Duger, PA-C, director of physician assistants at Newton, Mass.-based multispecialty medical group, Atrius Health
“Practices should understand that the roles of physician assistants and the 'clinical team' are evolving. Physician assistants can increase patient access to the practice, enhance patient satisfaction (which is often tied to access), increase revenues, and improve the outcomes and quality on which practice compensation will be increasingly based. There's no point in recruiting a physician assistant if what you really need is a medical scribe. Make sure you’re recruiting a physician assistant for the right reasons — and that you understand and respect their role.”

-- Ryan Gehrke, director of recruiting at Dallas-based staffing firm, Merritt Hawkins
"It's always good to post availabilities on websites where physician assistants go for job postings and to advertise with particular specialties that are looking for new hires. For example, there are state and national associations for each specialty, along with a jobs board at the National Academy of Physician Assistants. General healthcare trade magazines are also a great place to post job listings."

-- Duger
"With the increasing demand for primary-care physicians, recruitment of physician assistants has become intensely competitive. Hospital systems and large private groups are gobbling up as many physician assistants as they can. Depending on your staffing capabilities, workload, timeframe, resources, and previous recruiting, you might need to consider engaging a search firm to help set up the fundamental components and execute the recruitment process."

--Jason Farr, senior vice president at Dallas-based staffing company, The Medicus Firm
"The best way to 'sell' your practice to a prospective physician assistant hire is to let them know they will be a part of a team. The physician assistants we hire want to know that they will be respected and have the autonomy to make decisions and back-up and education to further their careers."

--Robert Lee, family physician with Johnson, Iowa-based multispecialty group, The Iowa Clinic
"All of the practice characteristics should be [written down] — hours, scope of practice, number of patients to be seen, group governance responsibilities, and call and coverage — so that expectations are clear on both sides. Candidates should know going into the interview what the offer is and what the practice entails, so that the interview is about confirmation, not exploration. Practice leaders should also confirm on the front end who the decision-makers are and what the timeframe is for a decision on a candidate. Without a sequential process in place, clear lines of communication, and agreed-upon deadlines, physician assistant search efforts become diffused and can lead nowhere."

-- Gehrke
HIRING NEW GRADUATES

"New physician assistant graduates are very prepared, but practicing medicine can be difficult and it's important to ensure there are a variety of people surrounding new grads who are able to provide support and guidance. Of course, we all start as new grads and there are always opportunities, depending on a candidate's specific background. My preference is to work with new graduates in a team setting or with multiple clinicians at a time because of the support that provides."

-- Duger
OFFERING A SIGNING BONUS

"Signing bonuses are rapidly becoming a 'must' for recruiting physician assistants, so be prepared to offer one. If your opportunity requires a relocation for your desired candidate, you may also have to consider assisting with relocation costs, or offering a bit more money to compete with local opportunities. All of the physician assistants placed by our clients were paid a signing bonus in 2015. (According to The Medicus Firm's data), the average signing bonus was $6,250. And the average salary of physician assistants we have worked with was $112,680. Always keep in mind that salary offers will vary by state, region, town size, and experience/specialty."

-- Farr
PAY ATTENTION TO STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

"Make sure you're familiar with your state laws and regulations regarding the scope of practice, certification, and licenses for physician assistants, as well as prescribing authority for physician assistants in your state. These vary by state, and some are changing each year, so familiarity with these rules and regulations prior to your search will save some headaches down the road."

-- Farr