Do I Have What It Takes to Be a Hematologist?

Name: _____________________________________________

Class/Period: ________________________________

Instructions:
2. Answer the questions below using information from your research.

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Q
A

How did you become interested in the field of hematology? Clinical research, in particular?

Hematology is a dynamic field with exciting breakthroughs in diagnosis and treatment occurring on a regular basis. Clinical research interested me because I wanted a career that finds better ways to diagnose and treat blood diseases and, at the same time, be able to maintain direct patient contact.

Q
A

Why do you think it’s important for people to get involved in this field?

The study of blood and blood diseases is absolutely fascinating as blood is an organ that literally touches, affects, and connects every organ in the body. Hematology is a specialty that requires a large amount of intellectual investigative work. There are vast numbers of malignant [cancers] and non-malignant diseases related to hematology that I always feel intellectually challenged in a positive way.
In your experience, what is the most difficult or challenging aspect of becoming a hematologist in the United States?

In today’s medical reimbursement environment, it is difficult to solely practice hematology. Thus, many private practice hematologists must also incorporate primary care into their practice. Unfortunately, it seems possible to only practice pure hematology if one works at a large academic center.

How do you feel advances in technology (recent or past) have helped you along the way, be it in your studies or in general practice?

Hematology has seen revolutionary changes in the way we treat hematologic malignancies in the last 10 years. The advent of drugs such as imatinib for chronic myelogenous leukemia and lenalidomide for multiple myeloma has revolutionized the way we treat these blood cancers. Both drugs are pills that help patients avoid other toxic treatments, which were the only available options until recently. Advances such as these stimulate and remind me why I chose the dynamic field of hematology.

What do you find to be most rewarding about a career in hematology research?

I am on the forefront of the medical field, and I hope that I am making a difference. I primarily work in the field of blood and bone marrow transplantation. This is a treatment that offers a cure to patients with cancers, such as leukemia, that weren’t curable 20-30 years ago.

Finally, what advice might you have for a younger person who will be pursuing a career in this field?

Try to decide as early as possible if you choose to pursue a hematology career in private practice, academia, or industry. Knowing early will help you best tailor your training to be highly competitive and well trained when seeking your first job. However, at the same time, be open to all possibilities and don’t overly restrict yourself so that you will always have options should your career path unexpectedly change. Fortunately, hematology is such a diverse, all-encompassing specialty that hematologists will always have options, whether in a big city or small town.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the educational and training requirements in order to become a hematologist?
2. Why did the hematologists featured in the video clip and interviews choose to enter this field?
3. Are you interested in becoming a hematologist? Why or why not?