Pursuing a Medical Career Outside of the USA

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To the Editor,

We read with interest the excellent article written by Dr. Chaptini [1]. As US-trained gastroenterologists who practiced in the USA and are currently practicing outside of the USA, we can relate to the many points raised by this article.

One of the barriers that US-trained gastroenterologists may face in certain countries is the mistrust in the medical system, in part due to decades of deviations from standard practice by a few practitioners. Overcoming this mistrust takes significant effort by physicians as strong therapeutic rapport with patients and their families needs to be built.

A second obstacle physicians may face, as Dr. Chaptini alluded to, is the shortage of guidelines that apply to the population they are serving. In many instances, physicians need to be innovative, think outside the box, and frequently apply different guidelines (American, European, and Asian guidelines) to better serve their patients (e.g., surveillance of gastric intestinal metaplasia).

However, practicing abroad can have significant benefits. US-trained physicians are overall respected and well perceived by patients and health authorities. Such reputation can foster a collaborative relationship which can contribute to shaping health policies in different countries. Furthermore, working abroad can potentially provide the physicians with a golden opportunity to delve into uncharted areas of

research. We are privileged to work with four North American-trained gastroenterologists who are currently practicing in our center. As a group, we frequently have lengthy discussions about the differences between the clinical conditions seen in the UAE versus North America. For example, we have anecdotally noted a lower-than-expected prevalence of Barrett's esophagus and colon cancer and higher incidences of *Helicobacter pylori* infection and severe Crohn's disease among our patients in the UAE. These discussions are the sparks that ignite a variety of research projects.

Finally, working with colleagues from different parts of the world can create some challenges but can also be an eye-opener to the different scientifically validated methods in managing a variety of medical conditions (e.g., terlipressin use in hepatorenal syndrome).

In conclusion, although many US-trained gastroenterologists may miss the familiarity of working in a US-based system, practicing abroad can offer rich opportunities that can be harvested with extra effort.

Reference

1. Chaptini L. Challenges faced by US-trained gastroenterologists when pursuing a medical career outside of the USA. *Dig Dis Sci.* 2017;62:3266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10620-017-4809-2>.

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