

Analysis of Orthopaedic Surgeons Changing Practice

Eisa Razzak, Jackson Huttner, Shreya M Saraf, Mary K Mulcahey

INTRODUCTION:

An estimated 50% of orthopaedic surgeons change practices within their first few years of practicing as attendings, with recent data showing that roughly 6% do so after two years of starting practice. Currently, the factors that lead to orthopaedic surgeons changing practices are not well understood as there is a paucity of literature regarding the topic. While studies have been conducted on elucidating practice change among general surgeons and subspecialty surgeons, no such investigation has been made for general or specialized orthopaedic surgeons. The purpose of this study was to analyze the self-reported factors that influence an orthopaedic surgeon's decision to change practices. We hypothesize that the most important factors include compensation, challenging work environment, proximity to loved ones, career growth, cost of living, and location (i.e., school district reputation for children and safety). By clarifying such factors, hospital administrations may gain a greater understanding of orthopaedic surgeons' professional expectations. Additionally, newly trained orthopaedic surgeons may better understand which factors are most important when deciding where to practice.

METHODS:

A 25-question survey was designed using Microsoft Forms. A total of 100 orthopaedic surgeons who are members of the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons were randomly selected to participate in this survey. Consent was obtained at the start of the survey, followed by demographic data including age, race, and gender, and region of practice. Respondents were then asked to indicate which factors played a role in their most recent change of practice. Such factors included (1) proximity to friends and family, (2) hospital location, (3) cost of living, (4) school district, (5) compensation, (6) work flexibility, (7) challenging work environment, (8) research opportunities, (9) academic opportunities, (10) career growth opportunities, (11) department size, and (12) prestige. Respondents were then asked to indicate the level of importance for each factor using a Likert scale. To maintain privacy, no identifiable information was recorded. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted upon retrieval of the data.

RESULTS:

Among the 27 participants who completed the survey, 17 had changed practices at least once. The most important factors that influenced their decisions to change practice included compensation (12, 70.6%), work flexibility (10, 58.8%), proximity to friends and family (7, 41.2%), academic opportunities (6, 35.3%), and cost of living (6, 35.3%). Those who did not change practices were asked to convey the factors that they would consider in the event that they do change practices. Those factors included proximity to friends and family (6, 60%), work flexibility (5, 50%), and compensation (4, 40%).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, compensation and work flexibility are the most important factors that are considered by orthopaedic surgeons when deciding where to practice. Such information may provide residents with greater insight into what they might need to consider in the future. It also provides hospitals with an outline to incentivize greater surgeon retention and a positive work environment.