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## Doctor [Career Paper]

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### Future Career Research Paper

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a doctor. Even when I was little, I enjoyed wearing a plastic stethoscope around my neck and using it to listen to the heartbeats of my parents and friends. As I grew older, I developed a passion for biology, especially as it related to the field of medicine. I was fascinated by the way that biochemical reactions and cellular-level processes could have broader impacts on tissues, organs, and the body as a whole. As I learned more about the biological underpinnings of medical treatments – from flu vaccines to chemotherapy to organ replacement – I knew I wanted to dedicate my career to the practice of medicine. As a doctor, I would have the chance to embrace my love of the biomedical sciences while also making a positive difference in the lives of others. Therefore, when I enrolled at Western Kentucky University, I decided to major in biology and complete the pre-med course requirements, with the goal of one day going to medical school and becoming a doctor.

When I began researching a future career as a doctor, I found the Occupational Outlook Handbook to be a particularly useful resource. This resource provides a clear overview of the educational requirements for physicians, which include a bachelor's degree and a medical degree from a four-year medical school ("Physicians and Surgeons"). Before medical school, an aspiring medical student must pass the MCAT exam. After medical school, most aspiring physicians complete a residency and/or fellowship program in a particular area of interest ("Physicians and Surgeons"). However, the Occupational Outlook Handbook did not provide training information for specific specialty areas, so it was helpful for me to look at the website of the American Academy of Family Physicians, a free online resource. Although I have not yet decided on a specialty area, I would consider becoming a family physician, and this website informed me that I would need to complete a three-year residency after finishing my medical degree ("Training Requirements"). I could also complete a one-year fellowship in a subspecialty

of interest, such as geriatrics, obstetrics, preventive medicine, research, rural medicine, or sports medicine (“Training Requirements”).

The Occupational Outlook Handbook was also somewhat helpful by providing basic salary information for doctors. According to this resource, the median pay for physicians and surgeons in 2016 was equal to or greater than \$208,000 per year (“Physicians and Surgeons”). This indicated that doctors earn high salaries, but for more specific salary information, I found it useful to look at an article in the *British Medical Journal*, which I accessed through the WKU library. This article included the average annual salaries of US doctors in 2011, which ranged from \$156,000 to \$315,000 (Tanne). Interestingly, Family Medicine was one of the lower-paid specialty areas, with the average practitioner earning \$158,000 per year (Tanne). However, when considering this resource, it is important to recognize that it was not published as recently as the Occupational Outlook Handbook, so the information may not be as reliable.

Finally, I found the Occupational Outlook Handbook useful because it offered specific statistics on the job outlook for physicians and surgeons. As a group, physicians and surgeons are expected to see employment growth of 13% between 2016 and 2026, which is faster than the national average (“Physicians and Surgeons”). The outlook for family and general practitioners is even higher, at 14% (“Physicians and Surgeons”). While this statistical information was helpful, I also found a book from the WKU library to be a beneficial resource because it offered a qualitative analysis of the future of the medical profession. The author, who is a doctor himself, argues that technology will play a much more significant role in the practice of medicine in the future, and it will give patients access to more medical information than ever before (Topol). As I look ahead to a career in medicine, it will be interesting to see how technology affects my practice.

Works Cited

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