



Kuchnir Dermatology & Dermatologic Surgery

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A new workforce has emerged in the healthcare industry. In recent years, pre-medical students have trended toward taking a “bridge year” between college and medical school. Traditionally, students who have chosen to take time off have pursued research opportunities, however, many students would prefer something more clinically oriented. These future physicians represent a highly qualified and motivated, but as of yet underutilized workforce. We have redefined the bridge year by offering future physicians the opportunity to join our practice for a fourteen-month commitment as a Doctor Assistant.

The success of this bridge-year program depends on the quality of the employee. The strategy of recruitment is therefore extremely important. We work closely with the career centers and pre-health advising teams of high-ranking undergraduate institutions to procure the most qualified candidates. The job description is posted through the career website, a trusted resource widely used by graduating seniors. It is rare to come across a job listing that requires only a one-year commitment to fill this single bridge year, so our posting—which offers this convenience—has attracted an abundance of bridge-year applicants from the country’s top universities (*see Appendix 1*).

On-campus interviews are conducted at the beginning of the calendar year to assess the interpersonal skills required to complement a strong academic pre-medical resume. Once an applicant is selected, he or she is expected to join the practice soon after graduation to maximize overlap with the previous bridge-year employee. This two-month overlap is a key training period, ensuring a smooth transition for both the successor and the practice as a whole. The structure of this program is essentially modeled after the standard medical residency program.

The doctor assistant position is intended to be of high educational value for any pre-medical student committed to the path of becoming a future physician. Students within the program are able to participate in unique experiences such as attending medical conferences with doctors, reading about dermatology, learning from advanced peer mentors (ie: medical students and residents), and intimately working within a successful, ethical private practice. Weekly meetings for various projects are currently being held between doctor and student. Current projects include book writing, website designing, and Dermatoethics reading.

The position itself involves doing everything but the actual doctor’s job, and thus covers a wide variety of tasks. In short, it combines the traditional roles of a medical receptionist and medical assistant. Assisting our doctors involves responsibilities such as communicating with pharmacy/hospital staff, arranging patient appointments, managing materials/supplies, and assisting with medical and surgical procedures. The environment of a private practice encourages a unique and steep learning curve.

We already have had eighteen future physicians, and have found the program to be of great value and success in our practice. As aspiring physicians, they are grateful for the clinical experience as well as the exposure to the business side of how a practice runs. Because the interest in this position is greater than what our practice can accommodate, fifteen other students have been referred and accepted in other high quality private practices. We welcome any contact to discuss in greater detail the potential implementation of this type of program in other practices.

Appendix 1.

"Doctor Assistant - Bridge Year(s) Opportunity for Premedical Students" Kuchnir Dermatology & Dermatology Surgery

We hope to attract the best possible future physicians to spend their "bridge-year(s)" serving as full-time, paid Doctor Assistants in our practice. This position is intended to be of educational value for a future physician who is interested in learning medicine by attending conferences with our doctors, learning dermatology by reading, and observing the function of a successful, ethical private practice. Direct physician mentorship is a key component of the experience.

The doctor assistant concept combines the traditional roles of medical receptionist and medical assistant. Responsibilities involve coordinating all aspects of patient care, including arranging appointments, optimizing physician efficiency, assisting with medical and surgical procedures, managing materials and supplies, and handling patients before, during, and after outpatient care. This position requires excellent communication and interpersonal skills, as cooperating with patients, physicians, and coworkers in a busy clinical environment is the routine.

One-year and two-year positions are available. The one-year option requires a fourteen-month commitment from June 2017 through the end of July 2018. The two-year position continues until July 2019. Successful candidates will graduate from a four-year college or university with a strong undergraduate education and all pre-medical requirements satisfied. Intention to matriculate in an MD or MD-PhD program at the conclusion of the bridge-year(s) is required.

Kuchnir Dermatology & Dermatologic Surgery has four locations in the suburbs west of Boston with ten physicians and one nurse practitioner. We have cared for over one hundred thousand different patients in the past decade. We currently employ sixteen bridge-year students for the 2016-2017 academic year. Their service dovetailed with twelve students who matriculated at medical schools in 2016. We also regularly interact with twenty-three other students who are currently employed by our colleagues. Please visit kuchnirdermatology.com to learn more about our mission, our doctors' educations, and our office locations. To apply, send a cover letter and one-page resume directly to Dr. Kuchnir.