



DERMATOLOGIC DISQUISITIONS AND OTHER ESSAYS
Edited by Philip R. Cohen, MD

The checklist: BEST medical center employment requirements 2015



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Abstract Dr. Ida Lystic, a newly minted gastroenterologist, has accepted a job at the Byron Edwards & Samuel Thompson (BEST) Medical Center. On her first day, after six months of preliminary paper work, she completes multiple checklists mandated by the center: dress code, employee health, and class checklists. Her open-toe pumps have been replaced by disposable paper booties and her polished fingernails have been covered with blue latex-free gloves. Nicotine screening (the use of which is prohibited not only while at work at the BEST Medical Center, but also while at home) was performed, and she had a mask fitting for tuberculosis. Her next two weeks were to be occupied with over 70 hours of required classes; however, after receiving a mandatory flu shot, she became sick and missed the first week of classes, and so her start date for seeing patients is delayed by two months. Although she was hired because she received the outstanding fellow award at the place where she trained (the OTHER—Owen T. Henry and Eugene Rutherford—Medical Center), her competence needs to be documented by a junior faculty member who is assigned to do this for all incoming physicians, including the world-renowned, new center director. The human resources manager smirks as she indicates that no one meets their relative value unit (RVU) work targets at BEST, and so Dr. Lystic must prepay for all the paperwork/tests. While Dr. Ida Lystic and “the BEST Medical Center” are creations of the authors’ imagination, most of the items on her checklists are real.

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Introduction

I, Dr. Ida Lystic, am finally a gastroenterologist, preparing to start my first position after 14 years of post-secondary school education and training (4 years college; 4 years medical school; 6 years residency and fellowship). I have interviewed at major academic institutions across the United States and have accepted an offer to work at the Byron Edwards & Samuel Thompson (BEST) Medical Center.

I spent all of my spare time during the past 6 months preparing for my new position. This included not only acquiring a new state medical license but also using the better part of three trees to provide the paperwork necessary to accomplish each of the following: hospital privileges, promotion committee packet, and financial package (so that my future efforts at meeting my work units (known as relative value units [RVUs]) would be reimbursed. I also passed my gastroenterology board examinations and am now certified in both internal medicine and gastroenterology. Happily, I also passed the typing test (minimum 70 words/min—obligatory for efficient use of the electronic medical record) and the

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HumanThought™ personality test required for all hires at the BEST Medical Center.

First stop: Human Resources

Rested and ready, I arrived for my first day of work. I had purchased a new outfit for the occasion—blouse, slacks, and pumps. I followed the signs to the Human Resources (HR) office to be “processed” by “the BEST.” Photograph and name badge, easy. Pick up a new white coat (and they even spelled my name correctly), no problem. Then, I was sent to meet with the HR intake manager so that I could sign more forms and go over the first of several checklists.

Dress code/appearance checklist

- No open-toe shoes
- No high heels
- No long fingernails or false nails
- Hair not longer than 3 inches from the scalp
- No beard or moustache (thank goodness, not me)
- Skirts to knees
- No tank tops
- No tattoos or piercings

I asked the HR manager why some of these items would be restricted—specifically, the ones concerning shoes, hair, and nails. I am 36 years old and take pride in my appearance. The initially sweet and pleasant manager became authoritative and demanding. “Doctor,” she said, “you are now part of the BEST Medical Center. We do everything to ensure the safety of our staff and our patients. You do realize that open-toe shoes are dangerous. You could drop something on one of those exposed toes. Please be sure not to wear them again; and high heels are hazardous, as you could slip. These mandates are for your own good.”

“Well, what about the fingernails and hair?” I asked, somewhat distressed. The manager looked stern and answered, “Doctor, you should know that long fingernails and hair can spread infection.” Shocked, I asked, “Do I really have to cut my hair? It’s only shoulder length.” The manager frowned at me and said, “I am surprised you ask that, doctor. You know that hair can be infested with lice, which can spread easily. Now, I do not agree with this one bit, but the hospital administration will allow you to keep your hair longer than 3 inches, providing you always wear it in a cap and undergo a delousing shower every 3 months.” I was surprised and puzzled, because I was not aware of any footwear, hair, and nail restriction for the family members who visited the patients at the hospital. As far as I could tell, there was no shoe, nail, and hair inspection station in the lobby.

The manager looked at me and held out a pair of disposable paper booties, a cap for my hair, and gloves. She then became friendly again and said, “Give me your shoes

and I will bag them for you; you can wear these paper booties. You have 48 hours to return for inspection of your haircut. In the meantime, you can wear this cap; and here are some latex-free surgical gloves to cover those nails.”

Next stop: Employee Health

I must have looked ridiculous as I walked through the halls. My head was covered with a cap to hide my hair, my fingernails were covered with the stylish blue gloves, and my pumps were gone; instead, I walked in disposable paper shoe booties that were not designed by Stuart Weitzman.¹ We arrived at Employee Health, and I signed in.

Employee Health checklist

- Hair test for drugs (baseline and random checks)
- Blood test for nicotine (baseline and random checks)
- Blood test for alcohol detection (baseline and random checks)
- Dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA scan) for body fat (baseline and every 6 months)
- Gold test for tuberculosis (baseline)
- Mask fitting for tuberculosis (baseline)
- HIV test (baseline and yearly)
- Vaccination review and antibody titer testing (baseline)
- Flu shot (baseline and yearly)

A physician assistant (PA) greeted me at the door. The HR manager remained in the waiting room as I entered the examination room. The PA looked over the medical record I had previously submitted. She commented, “Claims to be a nonsmoker—that is good. Regardless, we will still be doing a blood test that detects nicotine metabolites even a week after a single cigarette. The Center has become very strict about employees who smoke—even at home. The administration had to fire several support personnel and even deny contract renewals for a few of the physicians last year.”

After she took my vital signs, she had me stand on the scale. I never considered myself to be a heavy person, but I am not a waif. “Hmm,” I heard her say. “Your weight is in the upper 5% of normal for your height. We want our employees to set a good example. As you know, overweight individuals are at increased risk for cardiovascular events and diabetes. Based on your height and weight, I am guessing that your body fat is about 26%. The baseline DEXA scan will give us a more exact percentage. Because this is the BEST Medical Center, we offer women such as you, with body fat above 25%, mandatory nutritional intervention, exercise sessions (4 hours per week), and DEXA scans twice per year to ensure that your body fat does not increase. If at any point it exceeds 30%, we would have to let you go.”

She had completely caught me off guard with her comments. I protested, “But my weight is normal, even if it is at the upper

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