

## Choosing a Specialty: A Critical Career Decision

*Choosing a specialty is a major decision which will affect the rest of your training, and the rest of your life. While choosing your specialty will be influenced by many factors, making wise career decisions can be aided by getting factual information on salaries and debt repayment, and by utilizing Careers in Medicine.*

### Many Factors Influence Career Choice

Studies confirm that numerous factors, such as interest in and exposure to a specialty, lifestyle, compensation, debt, and length of training among others, influence the choice of specialty. Interestingly, debt, compared to other factors, does not appear to have as great an influence over specialty choice as might be assumed if one were to look solely at the debt totals of recent graduates. Those who choose primary care specialties, which are usually at the lower end of the M.D. salary range, are typically able to repay significant student loan debt while maintaining a comfortable “lifestyle.” The box at the right shows median early-in-career salaries for several specialties. For a more in-depth look at current salary information for a wide range of specialties, see the [Careers in Medicine](#) Web site.

### Four-step Career Development Process is Key

The Careers in Medicine (CiM) program can assist you in choosing a medical specialty and applying to residency programs that meet your career goals. CiM uses a four-step career development process:

### Understanding Yourself

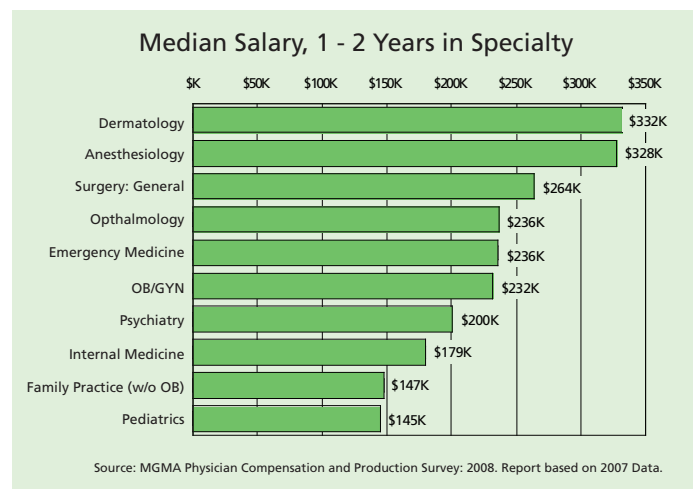
– The goal of this phase is to achieve a greater understanding of yourself and to address the question: What do I want to do in my medical career? You can assess your interests, values, skills, residency preferences, and personality through online and school-provided tools. All of your results are stored in a confidential, online Personal Profile.

**Exploring Options** – This phase of the program explores the variety of specialties and practice settings through the online Specialty pages. Information is available for over 100 specialties about the nature of the work, personal characteristics, residency requirements, match data, workforce data, salary and links.

**Choosing a Specialty** – In this phase you’ll evaluate your options through decision-making information and tools to assist you in choosing the right specialty.

**Getting into Residency** – This phase helps to give guidance on applying for

### Sample Specialties and Salaries



and being accepted into a residency program including valuable information and tips about the residency application process, interviewing, and the Match, along with things to consider in completing medical school and beginning residency. See the [CiM Web site](#) for more information about the program and this four-step process.

### Loan Repayment Resources

Learning about and knowing how to make smart decisions concerning your student loan repayment options may be reassuring as you ponder your specialty choice. Be sure to review the facts and figures of the sample repayment examples found on the [FIRST](#) Web site.