

# Medical CVs

## Developing a Medical CV

Your CV is a building block for many aspects of career development, such as:

- Your CPD portfolio
- Assessment processes such as Foundation assessment, ARCP/RITA
- Basis for written job applications
- Speculative job applications
- Building career networks (*"I'll send you my CV"*)

In short, a CV is an advertisement for you. A good advert makes you want to know more about a product. In a CV, **you** are the product.

## Getting Started

Putting pen to paper is always difficult, but there are some sections of your CV that hardly require any thought – personal details, date of birth, education, and exam results etc. Start with these and you will have made progress immediately.

One challenging part of drafting your CV is aligning the skills and interests you have developed with the specific career options you are aiming to explore or progress in. You'll need to think hard about the skills you have developed from medical school, electives, your training so far, other work experience (paid and unpaid), even relevant hobbies and interests. Also any key achievements; what was the context, what did you do, what was the result?

So, research the sorts of medical career you want to pursue, focus on presenting the skills and attributes from your past experience which show evidence of your suitability. For example:

- Academic medicine – research experience, publications
- Specialty training – skills, aptitudes and experiences relevant to the person specification for the specialty

If you are exploring several career options, you should tailor and create a CV for each, tailoring the evidence to match.

## Key elements of a medical CV

- Personal details: name, address, contact information. Details about age, family, marital status are unnecessary.
- GMC number and any other information relating to eligibility e.g. residency status, PLABS/IELTS results
- Career plan: your career aim, how this job will fit into the plan
- Professional qualifications: usually in reverse chronological order
- Education: mention prizes, distinctions, electives, special study assignments
- Professional expertise: include job title and location in reverse chronological order. Give a sentence or two giving an overview of your role and responsibilities, then two or three bullet points outlining specific personal achievements. Put more information about recent posts.
- Practical skills: Summarise specialty experience, also technical/clinical skills
- Additional courses
- Research: plus any related publications and presentations
- Teaching: to who and in what topics
- Audit: include your role in the process, the outcome and quantifiable improvements
- Management/Organisational roles: include roles outside work
- Other relevant skills: non clinical skills e.g. language and particular IT skills
- Interests: Include a couple of your interests that you can talk about at interview and that add value to your application
- Referees: At least two and make sure that you have asked them first

Avoid long lists of posts, courses, presentations etc. Cluster and group items and include brief explanation or bullet points highlighting key points or achievements

## Language and style

How you say something can be just as important as what you say. The same is true when writing a CV. You need to be positive, professional and enthusiastic in your CV.

- Choose words with an impact that will convey your ability to achieve. The best words to use are ACTION words. Examples are:-

|             |           |            |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Achieved    | Managed   | Produced   |
| Persuaded   | Presented | Organised  |
| Implemented | Developed | Researched |
| Negotiated  | Created   | Conducted  |

- Start your sentences with these action words; don't overuse the word "I".
- Keep sentences short, avoid narrative. This will make your CV sound punchy and concise.
- Always use positive language. Sell yourself – if you don't, no one else will do it for you.

## Presentation tips

Presentation and layout also matter:

- Do not write "Curriculum Vitae" at the top – it's obvious what it is!
- Avoid leaving too much white space on any page.
- Keep really key information on the front page – this is the one that selectors will read, whereas their attention span will drift as they work their way through, tending to scan the later information.
- Keep tabs, indentation and bullet points in a consistent style and use a font that is easy on the reader's eye. Sans serif fonts such as Arial or Tahoma work well.
- Use emboldened type to highlight information, rather than capitals or underlining. If you try to use more than one of these devices to highlight sections or titles, the content begins to "shout" at the reader.
- Remember to keep the point size readable; don't fall into the trap of using small fonts to get more information on the CV.

Medical and academic CV tends to be longer than the 2-page norm in most sectors but this is no excuse to produce volumes. An early career medical CV should be no more than 3 – 4 pages and even an established career should aim to contain the CV in around 6 – 8

pages. This means regular pruning; whenever you add detail of a new career experience to your CV, edit some of the older material.

## Personal Profile or Career Aim

This can be an excellent way to grasp attention and to give the reader some focus to the sort of career you want to enter. It needs to be done well though. A badly written, unfocussed personal profile can give a negative first impression.

- The profile should be no more than two or three short sentences outlining what your career aim is, what you offer, what you are looking for now. This can be adapted to match different specialties or job applications.
- If you include a personal profile, ensure that the skills that you highlight are backed up by the rest of your CV.

If you are applying for work outside the UK, check the standard CV format for that country and adapt your CV accordingly. In the USA, for example, the emphasis is on a summary document and in some European countries a photograph is expected.

## CVs in the established career path

In later career you have a wealth of work and life experience that can be valuable to a future employer. Not all employers initially realise this, and so you need to go the extra distance to market yourself on their CV. If changing career or specialty direction you should focus on transferable skills gained in previous posts, rather than highly honed specialist skills.

A *Functional* rather than a *Chronological* CV format can be helpful here. You will still need to account for what you were doing during sequential time periods. However, you can create several headings which highlight the skills and qualities you want to apply in a new direction, and then outline a few key achievements and experiences for each e.g.

- Research
- Audit
- Teaching
- Multi-disciplinary work
- Leadership
- Types of patient care/contact relevant to the option you have in mind (e.g. emergency/chronic, older or younger patients etc)