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## **THE EX-DOCTOR'S DIARY: Even Perfection is Flawed**

### *Job Satisfaction Is Relative*

By Michelle Mudge-Riley | February 1, 2006

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I always wanted to be a doctor. I planned for it my entire life and made an emotional, physical, and financial commitment to medicine. I finished medical school and then my internship at a prestigious hospital and I was board-eligible to be licensed as a physician.

Then, I quit. Not lightly, mind you. It took several months of agonizing to conclude that I simply didn't enjoy clinical medicine in the modern world. That was two years ago.

I still love healthcare, though, and decided to go back to school full-time to get a master's degree in health administration. My goal: to forge my own path in a career combining my clinical medical background with the business side of medicine. I had always loved school, and anticipated going back the way I used to look forward to starting a new grade in elementary school. Everything would be new, the possibilities endless. Anything could happen.

Moreover, I knew that this time I would be studying what I loved. I would be learning the things I used to read about for fun, things I used to only get an hour a day to indulge in. Indeed, I go to class now looking forward to the entire three hours. It excites me; I think about it on my drive home.

Plus, since I'm now going to school full time — instead of holding down a job while squeezing in classes as I had done in the past — I imagined having a lot more time than ever before to focus on my studies.

I envisioned a vast sea of time stretched out before me through which I could leisurely swim as the knowledge surrounded and engulfed me. I would have the time to fully learn and to get everything done without feeling like I was pulled in 100 different directions. The privilege of time, coupled with my desire to learn, would make me unstoppable.

Turns out, it's a lot harder than I thought it would be.

## Not enough time

I once read that you put your activities into the time you have. If you have four hours and six things to do, it will take you four hours to do those six things. No more, no less. To an extent, that's true. I'm a full-time student yet I'm not done with my homework every night at 6 PM and I typically have to do more on the weekends. I find myself skimming a lot of text and getting that shaky feeling when I find I have e-mails to answer, groups to meet, problem sets to finish, and reading to complete.

My butt hurts from sitting for extended periods of time.

I haven't read through an article twice yet.

I think I expected the new direction in my life to instantly improve other areas of my life like magic. Now that I have been back in school for a few months, I see myself getting frustrated with the day-to-day routine as the shine on the surface of the new opportunity dulls and I see myself taking for granted all the resources of knowledge at my fingertips. However, I think these details are inherent in anything, whether it's going to work, going to school or planning a fun event. I believe I would feel this way if spent my days sitting on a beach reading mystery novels. My butt would still hurt. I would get too much sun on my nose.

Don't misunderstand: I'm happier than I've been in a long time. I was looking for circumstances to push me out of my comfort zone and stretch my limits within the parameters of my intrinsic strengths and interests. And I found it.

But nothing is all roses and honey, not even something that's wonderful and perfect for you. In quitting clinical medicine, I got myself out of a situation that robbed me of my spirit and made me angry all the time. However, I didn't wake up the next day and love traffic jams or bad weather. The annoying neighbor is still annoying. I've learned that if the big picture is something that sustains you, the details will be little more than an annoyance to slog through.

So. How's your big picture looking?

*Michelle Mudge-Riley, DO, is currently a student in the Masters of Health Administration program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. She graduated from Des Moines University Osteopathic Medical School in 2003. Look for future installments of her "diary" in coming issues. She can be reached at [mudgeriley@yahoo.com](mailto:mudgeriley@yahoo.com) or via [editor@physicianspractice.com](mailto:editor@physicianspractice.com).*

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