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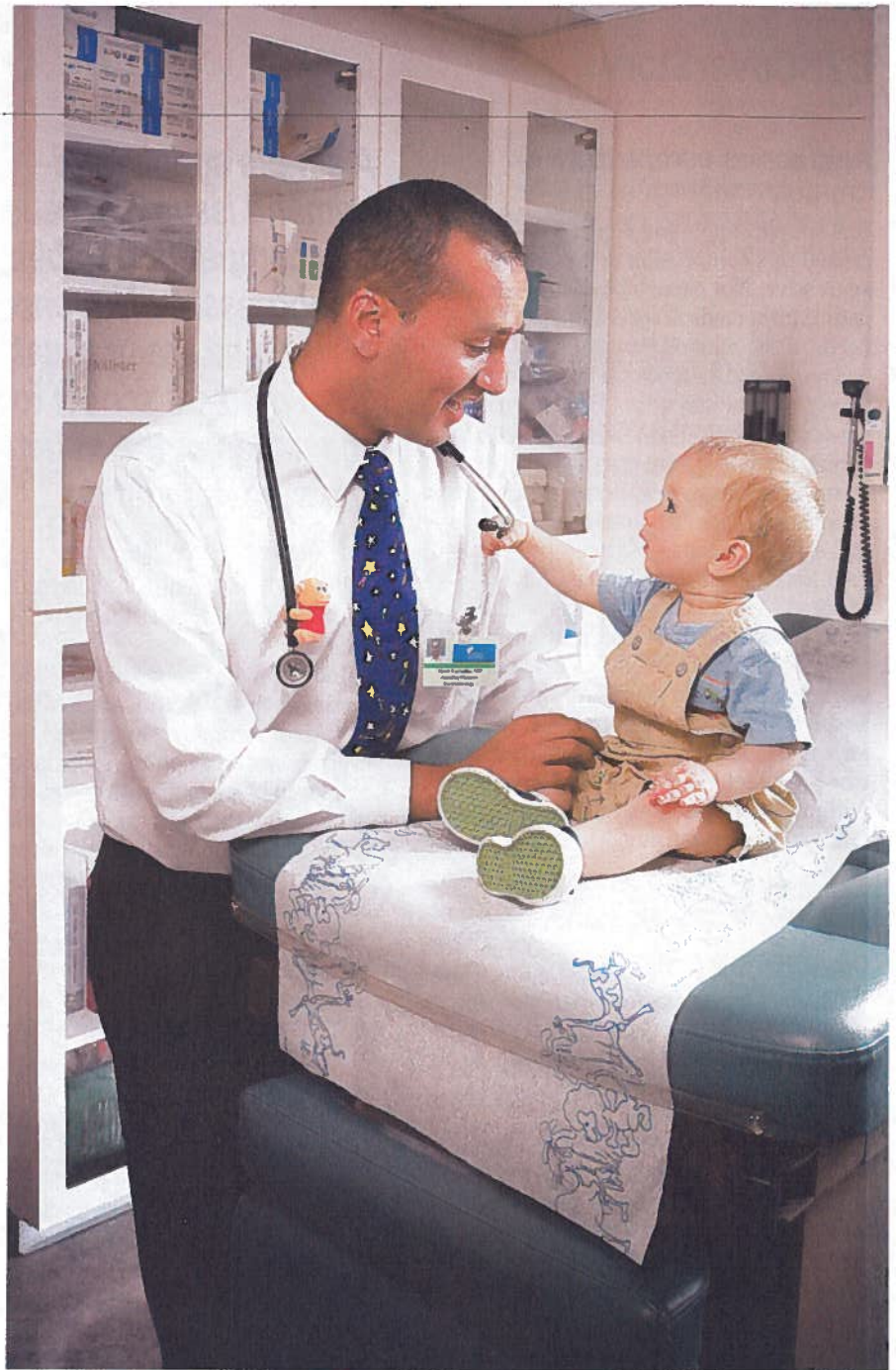
VOL. 1 NO. 4

A product of Dayton Daily News



# Dayton recruiters face brisk competition for first-class physicians

Potential professionals  
must be sold on the  
many attributes of the  
Miami Valley



**Dr. Ryan Carvalho, pediatric gastroenterologist, joined Dayton Children's in 2006, after being sold on the job, the hospital and the region.**  
Submitted photo

**By Kristen Wicker**  
B2B Contributing Writer

Dr. Ryan Carvalho had never lived in a city with a population of less than 6 million people before. So when the Children's Medical Center of Dayton came calling, he wasn't sure about a move to a smaller city.

But Carvalho, a pediatrician specializing in inflammatory bowel disease, was sold on the job at Dayton Children's. He moved to downtown Dayton in July 2006. And after the job description lured him to Dayton, Carvalho discovered this is a very easy place

to live, too.

"It's a lot less expensive to live here and a lot more convenient. Parking and traffic are not a problem, it's close to big cities, and your dollar goes so much further," he said.

It's not always easy to recruit physicians to the greater Dayton area, though. Recruiters must sell potential new physicians on the attributes of the region — as Carvalho was sold. These recruiters face brisk competition — nationally and internationally —

for first-class physicians.

"We're competing against everyone for the same people," said Shannon Isom, manager of physician support services and recruitment at Miami Valley Hospital. "When I look at recruiting, I don't look at us as competing against Kettering or Children's or (hospitals in) Cincinnati. I look at us recruiting against high-power institutions like the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and the Cleveland Clinic."

### Aggressive competition creates challenges

A simple supply-and-demand issue has caused this competition to become so aggressive: Not enough physicians are graduating from medical school to meet the needs of the nation's growing population.

The competition is even more intense in certain specialty areas. For example, approximately 150 to 175 job openings for pediatric surgeons are typically advertised at any given time — while approximately 25 people each year are completing their training, said Dr. Thomas Murphy, vice president for medical affairs at the Children's Medical Center and a physician specializing in pediatric infectious diseases.

The same is true in adult medicine. "If you're looking for a neurosurgeon, every hospital in the country is probably looking for a neurosurgeon," said Adam Middleton, vice president of business development for Atrium Medical Center. "There are fewer graduating than retiring. The competition can be very severe."

### Managed care leads to smaller paychecks, benefits

Changes in the medical profession during the past 10 to 15 years have contributed to this imbalance in physician supply and demand. First, physicians are not paid as well as they once were.

Because the greater Dayton area has traditionally been home to many large employers, it also has been "penetrated by managed care," Middleton said. The effect: "Physicians here are not making as much money as their colleagues across the nation," he added.

Yet physicians' earnings have declined nationwide, primarily due to lower reimbursements from insurance companies and such government programs as Medicaid and Medicare.

"Physicians have watched their expenses go up and income go down," said Greg Felder, physician recruiter for Community Mercy Health Partners. "People coming out of medical school are looking at other options because medicine is a very rewarding career but businesswise, it's very tough."

Compensation is even more of an issue in certain fields, such as pediatrics, which pays less than adult medicine, Murphy said.

Add to this fact that most physicians graduate from medical school with a huge

## ***A simple supply-and-demand issue has caused this competition to become so aggressive: Not enough physicians are graduating from medical school to meet the needs of the nation's growing population.***

debt load, and "young physicians are really taking a hard look at this issue," Felder added.

Indeed, many physicians who are completing their residencies are looking for a new kind of employment model — one not every hospital can offer — in which they're employed by a practice or hospital instead of operating their own practice, said Nancy Robie, director of business development for Grandview Hospital. "Younger physicians coming out of school with a heavy debt want something steady with a guaranteed monthly income," she said.

### A demand for work-life balance

Second, younger physicians want balance between work and family — especially female physicians, who now comprise more than half of all medical school graduates.

"There's a change between the younger physicians coming out who are looking for a work-life balance versus those who have been in practice for years and are used to the hours," Middleton said. "Younger physicians are really seeking a more balanced life and they want to not only practice medicine, but have a family and go for a vacation or a bike ride now and then."

Some of these physicians want to work part-time, further jacking up the supply-and-demand dilemma, Murphy said. "So one person coming out of training does not necessarily equal one full-time physician," he said.

Added to this mix is an issue that specifically affects the greater Dayton area: a lack of name recognition and less-than-desirable geography.

"When you talk to people about Dayton, you get blank looks or perhaps they've heard of the peace talks," Murphy said. "Also, a lot of people are in the East, West or South coasts, and the Midwest is at a dis-

tance from them culturally and in terms of climate."

### Tools help Miami Valley hospitals succeed

Yet even in the midst of these many challenges, professionals at area hospitals are successfully recruiting physicians to join their ranks — and retaining them once they're here.

"If we get (physicians being recruited) to come visit, we do a pretty good job," Murphy said. "Once we get them here, we're really good about keeping them."

The government supplies some of those tools. For example, the federal government allows recruiters to assist some physicians, whose specialty is particularly needed in the area, in establishing their practice by offering either a salary guarantee or a line of credit for up to two years, Middleton said.

Dayton Children's uses another federal program, called Health Professions Shortage Area, or HPSA, to hire physicians. Because of the shortage of physicians in certain specialties in this area and the high number of underserved patients, the hospital has been designated a HPSA facility, enabling it to recruit international medical school graduates, Murphy said. Typically, if a physician is from another country and completes his training in the United States, he must return to his home country to practice for at least three years. However, Ohio allocates 30 HPSA positions a year for the entire state, and the international physicians hired for these positions receive a specific visa that allows them to remain in the United States and practice for those three years instead of returning home. Sometimes, those physicians are able to remain in this country after those three years.

"We've had about seven physicians who came to us as result of that program, so it's been very helpful," Murphy said. "We've gotten some extraordinary people here and the first couple of individuals who have finished their three years are staying on."

### Making life easier for doctors

Area hospitals also focus on making physicians' lives as easy as possible.

The new facilities at Atrium Medical Center, located in Middletown, were constructed with that in mind. "Some of the challenges we've had in the near past were partly because of the facility and location: The hospital was hard to get to," Middleton said.

"Now, it's literally a minute off the highway. We try to make as efficient a workplace as possible, and try to make physicians' lives as easy as we possibly can within the regulations that the government allows."

Most hospitals ease physicians' lives by easing their transitions into the community. For example, Grandview Hospital, which brings in 10 to 20 physicians to the area each year, helps physicians grow their businesses by connecting them with a network of health care providers, Robie said. In addition, Miami Valley Hospital, which recruits from 25 to 35 physicians to work in the area each year, operates a physician liaison program. The hospital employs three liaisons, who work with new physicians for their first two years in town to make sure they're connected to everything from peers to their favorite pastimes, said Lori Goertemiller, director of business development at Miami Valley Hospital. The program includes a great deal of follow-up to make sure new physicians' needs are being met.

### Recruiting from the ranks

Some hospitals are able to recruit folks close to home. Robie, who recruits physicians for Grandview and Southview hospitals, said her biggest pool of talent comes from the hospitals' residents. "We have more than 100 residents in our system so we try to stay close to them and get them within our family of hospitals," which also includes Kettering Medical Center, Robie said.

All hospitals tout the things that make them stand out in the region. Indeed, research shows that 60 percent of a person's decision to relocate is based on the community's quality of life — and only 40 percent is based on the actual job, Isom said.

"The big issue is to make sure on the front end this community matches up with the physicians so folks stay put once you recruit them," she added.

It was a strategy that worked for Mark Gazall, a vascular surgeon at Grandview Hospital who began work about year and a half ago. Gazall, who completed his residency at Grandview in 2000, was practicing in rural Missouri. The only vascular surgeon in mid-Missouri, he was very busy very quickly — but also far from the larger cities to which he and his wife were accustomed.

"At a teaching hospital, you have residents and fellows who help make life easier so you have more time for family, and I like to teach and missed that part," Gazall

said. He and his wife decided the move was a good match, "particularly in terms of lifestyle," he added.

"Hospitals recruiting physicians need to pay attention to that because I think what

ends up making physicians unhappy is their lifestyle — that their practice never got to the point where they wanted it to be or they didn't have time for family and kids or both."

## Recruiting? Check out these tips from the pros.

- **TOUT ALL THE GREAT THINGS GOING FOR DAYTON:** the affordable cost of living, robust arts scene, quality schools, such activities as Dayton Dragons games and festivals, opportunities for families and children, and much more. "Connect (the recruit) with all aspects of the community," said Shannon Isom, manager of physician support services and recruitment at Miami Valley Hospital. "We really have a great gem in Dayton, and we stay focused on the city of Dayton when showing recruits the area. It's a great town. People always say, 'Boy, I didn't realize you had all this in Dayton.'"
- **RECRUIT NOT ONLY THE INDIVIDUAL, BUT HIS OR HER FAMILY AS WELL.** "We show the recruits' spouses around to try to make sure they're part of the decision," said Nancy Robie, director of business development for Grandview Hospital. "It's always important to make sure the family is comfortable and happy."
- **CONNECT THE RECRUIT WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS.** "Adjust your recruitment to what people's needs are," said Adam Middleton, vice president of business development for Atrium Medical Center. "When you recruit people, they are your customers and you need to take a customer service approach: Find out what their needs are and show how you can meet their needs."
- **ALLOW CURRENT EMPLOYEES, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME, TO HELP WITH THE SALES PITCH.** "Take advantages of the people who are here, who know the area and who are committed to it," said Dr. Thomas Murphy, vice president for medical affairs at the Children's Medical Center and a physician specializing in pediatric infectious diseases. "Use them as ambassadors. People will come here because they like the culture of the organization and they want to be happy, like their work and be fulfilled. So use your own employees as a way to encourage people to come."
- **MAKE SURE THE RECRUIT IS A GOOD FIT WITH THE ORGANIZATION, BOTH IN TERMS OF HIS OR HER PERSONALITY AND SKILL SET.** "If (the recruit's) personality type doesn't fit into the group, then long term that won't work," said Greg Felder, physician recruiter for Community Mercy Health Partners. "You have to look at all the other players who the recruit will interact with and ask, 'What happens when things get tense? What's their leadership style?' And you need to make sure they have a skill set that will complement the team — that they add a piece that other folks don't have." You can gauge recruits' fit with the organization via interview questions, especially those asking how they'd handle certain situations — and, if applicable, observing how recruits interact with their spouses, Felder added.