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### Lessons Learned from Locum Tenens: A Physician's Journey

Announcer:

Welcome to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD, sponsored by CHG Healthcare. Here's your host, Dr. Jennifer Caudle.

DR. CAUDLE:

This is *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm your host Dr. Jennifer Caudle, and joining me to share what she learned from her first year working as a locum tenens is Dr. Sarah Ali, a hematologist and medical oncologist at Ventura County Medical Center. Dr. Ali, welcome to the program.

DR. ALI:

Thank you so much. I'm so excited to share.

DR. CAUDLE:

Well, we're excited to have you. This is a great topic and really excited to hear about your adventures. So why don't we start with some background? You know, why did you decide to pursue locum tenens work as opposed to permanent employment?

DR. ALI:

I actually never considered being a locums physician. I was in an extremely successful group practice and things were going very well. I was in flow with the patients that I was seeing and just really satisfied. I found myself ignoring all the emails and phone calls from the recruiters.

There was one in particular that took a different approach and was really interested in what my values were as a physician, and really took the time to get to know the things that were important to me. It was during COVID, actually, in mid-2020, that I started to question, a lot of things about, my life in general, what was important to me. I love to travel. I'd love to explore different restaurants and new places. And I just wasn't able to do that, quite the same way, during lockdown.

So I took a chance and I pursued an opportunity in a small mountain town in Colorado. And my recruiter's name, his name actually happens to be Angel. And I took that as a sign of synchronicity in my life and felt it was the right thing for me to do.

I remember the feeling of, if I didn't pursue this opportunity, then I just wouldn't be able to go on further. Being a locums allowed me to, avoid physician burnout, which I saw happening, with so many others around me.

DR. CAUDLE:

That's wonderful. You know, I definitely hear what you're saying, what a special thing that his name was Angel. That's so interesting. You know, with that background in mind, can you tell us a little bit about your first locum tenens assignment?

DR. ALI:

It was probably the best year of my life it turned out to be longer than I had expected, in terms of how many months I was there for. But it was moving from big city to a small mountain village. And it was a beautiful, city of Glenwood Springs, nestled between Aspen and Vail. It was just an incredible, combination of attentive nurses, beautiful administration, wonderful, , physicians and nurse practitioners that I was working with. And really what it was, it was a different scenery., along with that, there were so many things that came together to make this experience so incredible. it's Colorado, it was just gorgeous. At a time again, during COVID, when things were shut down, I was opening up and I was expanding my experiences in the mountains, in the snow, and, hiking and boating, and rafting, and just truly making connections with another practice that was just doing really great work for their patients.

DR. CAUDLE:

I love that. And to kind of piggyback on some of those amazing experiences, what were some of - well, rather, what are some additional benefits that you enjoyed your first year as a full-time locum tenens? Are they different than what you've already described?

DR. ALI:

I think I grew up. I realized how adaptable I was, and how you just come in as this new doctor that nobody knows anything about, but you can have immediate impact. You can share your experience in a brand new setting, and just adding value in that sense. I think there was huge benefit, for everybody, for all the key players. You're bringing experience. Yeah.

DR. CAUDLE:

No, that's awesome. And, you know, on the flip side, what were some of the challenges you encountered that year and what did they teach you?

DR. ALI:

One immediate challenge as a locums is having to establish rapport so quickly. And just the lack of continuity. As an oncologist, we have a lot of ground to cover on an initial visit. There's a lot of discussion, and to, you know, start patients on treatment plans and not be there for years after, I missed out on that. But there's still so much to gain from getting in there, diving in deep with them, from the get go.

DR. CAUDLE:

Hmm, I love that, and I know that our listeners are going to benefit so much from your story.

For those of you who are just joining us, this is *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm your host, Dr. Jennifer Caudle, and I'm speaking with Dr. Sarah Ali about what she learned from her first year doing locum tenens work.

So Dr. Ali, now that you've shared some of the pros and cons of locum tenens work, let's take a look at the unexpected. What were the most surprising lessons your first year of locum tenens? And what did they teach you?

DR. ALI:

I was surprised about the need. There's such a demand for physicians all across the country. Not only the country, but in other parts of the world. Having locums opportunities in, completely different cultures. And cultures in the sense of even within America, when you go from, different regions, there are different expectations, and, that was surprising to me. Also, something that I found surprising was how incredibly warm everybody is. And when you come together for that patient experience and wanting to serve the patient in the best way possible, then all these other details about where you're coming from and why you're there, they seem to fade., we're all in there for the mission of service and that is so beautiful. When I'm looking for other opportunities as a locums, I feel so confident that this kind of mentality and this kind of support, it's everywhere.

DR. CAUDLE:

You know, and given your experience, what recommendations or advice would you give to other physicians who are hoping to switch to locum tenens work?

DR. ALI:

I would just recommend to keep an open mind. There are so many possibilities that one can explore. Medicine is changing. It is evolving. And you can create the own experience, that is unique for you. Go for the experience that stretches you, and go for the expansion. We're all so unique in our talents and personalities, and we can use them to serve our purpose within medicine. This is a way that I used locums to prevent physician burnout. It was so incredible to, feel the joys of being a locums, completely unexpected for me. There's a quote that I thought was from an athlete, and then when I dug deeper, it's actually a quote from Nelson Mandela, and I use it pretty much every day and I share it with as many people as possible. The quote is, "I never lose. I either win, or I learn." And this is something that keeps me going. If days are rough, or if I'm, you know, wishing I went back to my old job. So being a locums, it's incredible.

DR. CAUDLE:

Well with those pieces of advice in mind, I'd like to thank my guest, Dr. Sarah Ali, for joining me to share lessons learned from her experience with locum tenens work. Dr. Ali, it was really great having you on the program.

DR. ALI:

Thank you so much.

Announcer:

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