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A Life with Locum Tenens: Balancing Careers & Finding Opportunities

Announcer:

You're Listening to *Spotlight On Locum Tenens* on ReachMD in partnership with Locumstory.com. Here's your host, Dr. Charles Turck.

Dr. Turck:

Welcome to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm Dr. Charles Turck and joining me today to discuss his journey with locum tenens work and how he balances that with his full-time position is board-certified orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Nicholas Kusnezov.

Dr. Kusnezov, thanks for being here today.

Dr. Kusnezov:

Thank you for having me.

Dr. Turck:

So, Dr. Kusnezov let's start with some background. Would you tell us about your experience in the military and how that led you to locum tenens?

Dr. Kusnezov:

Sure. So, I think the answer's kind of manyfold. Military and locum tenens are actually pretty similar. I think both play into one another. Both military practice and locum tenens require a lot versatility in adapting to new and unfamiliar situations, similar to how you would show up to a locum job having not worked there and unfamiliar with your surroundings. The military is very similar in that regard.

Military practice in general, I think prepares you for locum tenens by again bolstering your resiliencies so that you're more prepared for those situations. I think that military is also a very broad practice. Many surgeons get out of residency and go into practice as a generalist and then over time may elect to do a fellowship but many may stay general so depending on what your practice is, I think that locum tenens acts as a fantastic supplement both in volume and in in case composition.

Dr. Turck:

And, what can you tell us about your first locum tenens assignment?

Dr. Kusnezov:

I think it was some time ago. I mean, I've been doing locums consistently for the past four years or so. My first assignment was in Cynthiana, Kentucky which was, again, small off-the-map place which, when I showed up, I found was actually the home to the writers of the *Walking Dead*, interestingly enough. I admittedly was a little bit nervous because I had no idea what to expect. You get a rundown from the locums company in terms of what the call frequency might be and how many surgical cases you might do a day but ultimately coming fresh out of residency you're ready to spread your wings but at the same time you're a little nervous, because you don't know what you don't know. So, I think dipping my toes in the water with kind of a slower level III was a good way to go and I shortly followed up thereafter with some more busy level II and level I trauma centers and have been consistently with that ever since.

Dr. Turck:

Now, how do you balance your full-time practice as an orthopedic surgeon with your locum tenens work?

Dr. Kusnezov:

Yeah, so I think that's an art, and I think something that's always ongoing one finding a good balance between your jobs, but also work-life balance. In regard to the jobs I think that my primary practice obviously comes first and over time, I've kind of built in weekend up unto periodically one-to-two-week coverage. I think, the biggest thing that I would communicate is that the most important thing is

communication, making sure that you have open channels of communication between your patients, your clinic manager, your staff especially when you're gone from your primary practice. But what's often overlooked is when you leave your locum's assignment, you want to make sure that patients are taken care of seamlessly when you leave, and that you're not neglecting either one. It's kind of a patchwork quilt assignments woven into my primary practice. It's something that is fine-tuned over time. You have to accommodate for travel sometimes cancellations of flights and having to drive or reschedule your flight or cancel assignments which honestly, I haven't had to do, but it's always good to have contingency planning both for travel, but also for patient care.

Dr. Turck:

For those just tuning in, you're listening to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm Dr. Charles Turck, and today I'm speaking with Dr. Nicholas Kusnezov about his experiences with locum tenens work.

So, Dr. Kusnezov how has your experience as a locum tenens orthopedic surgeon shaped your perspective on the role of locum tenens within your area of specialty?

Dr. Kusnezov:

I think my experiences with locum tenens as an orthopedic surgeon have really exposed me to the need for patient care. You get comfortable in your primary practice both with the type of patients that you're seeing but also within your niche and traveling around you realize what a demand there is for orthopedics not only locally but across the country both in your specialty as well as other specialties.

I think that there's a significant patient population that's under-served across the country and locums gives you the opportunity to work with those patients and at facilities that may be critical access facilities potentially more remote and not have exposure to surgeons with more experience with trauma or joint replacement. And, so oftentimes, when I travel to some of these locum's assignments I'm coming into a pool of patients who have been waiting to see an orthopedic surgeon for four to six months some of them with neglected injuries or arthritis, and so it's very satisfying to be able to deliver the care that's much needed.

Dr. Turck:

And for physicians looking to try locum tenens work, do you have any advice on how they can make the most of their experience?

Dr. Kusnezov:

Yeah, I think for physicians that are looking to try locum tenens work I would say start slow but get started somewhere. There are a lot of assignments that are constantly presented from the wide variety of locums companies out there, and it's easy to say, "that's not quite what I'm looking for," or "that's not quite the pay that I want" but get your foot in the door, that'd be my advice. I think, like I said when I first started I started kind of at a smaller level III facility it was kind of slow call, low demand but you get used to not just the locum work itself but also the versatility that you need to show up to new locations, learn the medical record, orient effectively and efficiently and get to work. So, I think there's a lot of apprehension among colleagues who are starting with locum tenens just because it's kind of a black box but, it's very rewarding and there's a lot of personnel out there who will orient you very quickly and get you plugged in.

Dr. Turck:

Before we close, Dr. Kusnezov, do you have any final thoughts or takeaways you'd like to share with our audience?

Dr. Kusnezov:

Yeah, I would say in summary, I think locums for orthopedics is a fantastic opportunity. I mean not just in terms of the supplemental case volume and mix, but the financial incentives. I think that it's a great opportunity to really diversify your practice whether you are a generalized or sports surgeon and you want to do more trauma or joint replacements, there's such a variety of opportunities out there, and they really cater to you as the locum surgeon.

Dr. Turck:

Well, with those final thoughts in mind I want to thank my guest Dr. Nicholas Kusnezov for joining us to share his experiences. Dr. Kusnezov, it was great speaking with you today.

Dr. Kusnezov:

Yeah, thank you so much for having me.

Announcer:

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