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Partners in Medicine: A Married Couple's Adventure in Locum Tenens

Announcer:

You're listening to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD sponsored by Locumstory. Here's your host, Dr. Charles Turck.

Dr. Turck:

From attending medical school in Mexico to being the only doctors in a small hospital in upstate New York, one husband and wife duo has been traveling the world from the beginning of their careers, and locum tenens has taken them to places they never would've imagined. So, what kind of impact has this journey had not only on their careers but also on their relationship as a couple?

Welcome to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm Dr. Charles Turck, and joining me to share their story are Drs. Paul and Holly Lobet, who are based out of Kingston, New York. Dr. Paul is an internal medicine physician. Dr. Paul, thanks so much for joining us today.

Dr. Paul:

Thank you. It's a pleasure being here.

Dr. Turck:

And Dr. Holly is a critical care and palliative care physician. Dr. Holly, welcome to you.

Dr. Holly:

Hi. Thank you. Great to be here.

Dr. Turck:

So, starting with you, Dr. Holly, would you tell us about how you got started with locum tenens and what your experience has been like?

Dr. Holly:

Sure. I have to credit my husband with getting me into locum tenens. I had been at the same job for 11 years, and I was very content, a little bored, but content with my job and had just thought that's what I was going to do. I came home one day, and Paul said I need you to give notice to your job. We're going to move to Guam and do locum tenens, and long story short, I took a six-month sabbatical from my job and took a locums in Guam for six months, and I actually ended up never going back to that job, and I've been doing locums for four years now. And we've been to Guam, Saipan, Saint Thomas, Saint Croix, Saint Martin. I've worked in California, in Arizona, and our next job we're off to is New Zealand.

Dr. Turck:

And turning to you now, Dr. Paul. Why were you interested in pursuing a career with locum tenens? And what's your experience been like?

Dr. Paul:

Originally, it never crossed my mind to do locums work, but there came a point where we were kind of stagnant, not necessarily in the marriage but more in the career. We weren't feeling very challenged, and then an opportunity came where I was able to sell my practice to a hospital system that had been moving up north and taking over much of the region, and that gave us a launching pad to be able to say let's go somewhere. So, we found Guam as the most exotic and furthest place to go and hence, as my wife had said, I told her she's got to give notice, and we're moving to Guam. We arrived in Guam, and we've never looked back. Locums has been a tremendous experience both for our careers and for our personal lives.

Dr. Turck:

So, you've mentioned what started as a six-month locums assignment in Guam. Dr. Paul, what else could you tell us about your time there?

Dr. Paul:

We started Guam in November of 2019. This was a few months just before COVID struck. So what turned out to be just a six-month contract to have a little bit of an experience ended up turning into a one and a half year as the island locked down in early February, and that's how we ended up staying in Guam for such a long period of time. So, that was unexpected but yet at the same time was a wonderful experience to be in Guam, to be one of the few physicians who were taking care of COVID at the time, and to really be of service because it's such an underserved area with difficulty in getting specialty care, getting healthcare providers there. So, we really felt empowered just by the fact that we were in need, and we were actually making a difference on the island.

Dr. Turck:

So, were there any other big differences between the healthcare system in Guam versus that of the continental US?

Dr. Holly:

They don't have as many specialists. They are quite limited. There's always a doctor shortage. I think it's worse in Guam than it is on the mainland. They really do struggle to recruit doctors. Some of their supplies aren't always there. Everything has to be flown in, so we're very dependent on this one flight a week that comes in to bring us blood, blood products, transfusions, and if that flight can't come, we don't get it, or if we use all the products before the week comes, there aren't going to be any more coming. So, you always have to be cognizant of how much and how quickly you're using your supplies. I think the other thing is if patients are too sick for us to manage on the island, transferring to another hospital is not a simple thing. We either transfer to the Philippines or to Hawaii, but the patient has to be able to tolerate a long flight in order to transfer. So, it's not like New York where, you know, we put them in an ambulance, and they're in New York City in an hour. We don't have that option in Guam.

Dr. Turck:

Now, I understand you, both took part in a medical mission to Mumbai, India. I was wondering what you could both tell us about that.

Dr. Paul:

So, Mumbai was an incredible experience. We've never been to that part of the world, and it's someplace that we always wanted to go. We were sponsored by a couple of agencies that nominated us to participate with Global Medical and Make a Wish Foundation and International Medical Relief, but completely different perspective of what I ever thought India was going to be. The people were probably one of the kindest people I've ever met. Everyone from the beginning, even getting to the airport, through the community, through the clinics, through the restaurants – everywhere – it was just such a welcoming culture. We really, really felt accepted and appreciated there and one of the highlights, I think, of all our trips was spending time in India.

Dr. Holly:

Yeah, I think one of my favorite parts that was actually my fourth medical mission, and what I did love is we got to just take care of patients. We didn't have to do hours of charting and clicking boxes on an EMR to, meet standards that had nothing to do with the patients. So, I really enjoyed 100 percent taking care of patients.

Dr. Turck:

For those just tuning in, you're listening to *Spotlight on Locum Tenens* on ReachMD. I'm Dr. Charles Turck, and I'm speaking with Drs. Paul and Holly Llobet about their journeys with locum tenens work. Now, before we close, I'd like to hear from each of you on how locum tenens has impacted both your careers and your relationship as husband and wife. Dr. Holly, let's start with you.

Dr. Holly:

So, it's been both positive and negative. There's good and bad. We do try to prioritize when we're picking jobs that we do them together so that they have jobs for both of us. We went to med school together, we did residency together, we've always worked together, so for us, doing a locums job apart has been the most difficult part of locums, but we've been fortunate enough for really the last three and a half years to always find a job working together. So, working and traveling has been wonderful for our marriage. Prior to doing locums, we worked all the time. One of us was always on call. Our phones rang all night long. I don't think either of us had a good night's sleep in 11 years. Rarely did we have dinner together, and if we did, we were probably on the phone or texting, but with locums, when you're on you're on, when you're off, you're off, and just going on these wild and wonderful adventures all around the world with my husband has been fantastic. So, overall, it's been very rewarding and a positive thing for our marriage.

Dr. Turck:

And Dr. Paul, I'll turn to you for the final word. How has locums impacted your career and your marriage?

Dr. Paul:

Starting with the career – it's allowed me to be a physician again. It's allowed me to focus on patient care, it's taken me away from a computer screen and clicking boxes and EHR type of work, and it's allowed me to put a lot more attention to the patient care: interactions, conversations, counseling. That's been wonderful, and not that the places we've been to do not have electronic medical records, but it just felt like the focus was always more on just take care of the patients first. I felt like in our careers, in different hospitals within the state of New York and other places, it was just so administrative heavy that it kind of took away from that pleasure of, being a physician. So, that's really, reinvigorated my career, my goals of being the physician again. When it comes to my marriage, I mean, I feel like I'm on a honeymoon all over again. You know, we're able to practice again together, we're able to travel the world, we're able to experience cultures together, and I look forward to our next locum assignment because I just know that us exploring the area, treating new people, learning new cultures, it just has brought us closer. So, I would say, hands down, it's probably been the best thing that's ever happened to my marriage.

Dr. Turck:

Well, with those final comments in mind, I want to thank my guests, Drs. Paul and Holly Llobet, for joining me to share insights from their experiences with locum tenens work. Dr. Paul, Dr. Holly, it was great having you both on the program.

Dr. Holly:

Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Dr. Paul:

Thank you so much. Pleasure being with you.

Announcer:

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