

THE PATHWAY TO THE PODIUM



Get involved in as many activities as you can.

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A career path is a journey involving various phases of development. Traveling along that path requires you to demonstrate initiative and dedication to the field. Consider taking some of the following steps during ophthalmology training and your early years of practice to direct your path toward establishing yourself in your profession.

GETTING INVOLVED

During residency and fellowship training, immerse yourself in each subspecialty rotation, and identify the unique surgical or clinical aspects of that subspecialty that may interest you. When you work alongside faculty, keep an eye out for their regularly scheduled lab meetings or journal clubs. By joining these activities, you can expand your knowledge and identify mentors and potential projects. Early in practice, join your local ophthalmologic and subspecialty societies as a way of staying informed and involved; this will also give you opportunities to meet colleagues in your field.

SHOWING UP

At every stage in your career, it is important to attend annual ophthalmology meetings, including both large-scale international conferences and more intimate subspecialty symposia. International meetings allow you to connect with colleagues from around the world and learn about diagnostic and surgical advances occurring in other countries. Exposure to current developments allows you to ask questions and may inspire new ideas. Smaller meetings can provide more interpersonal communication with presenters and facilitate opportunities for collaboration and mentorship.

When you attend an annual meeting, step outside the conference rooms to network at the social events, as this is where colleagues become friends and seeds of ideas for future projects and collaborations may develop.

If your ability to attend meetings is limited, participate in webinars and online discussions. These are becoming more readily available and are now provided by many meetings and societies.

FINDING YOUR NICHE

Identify a subject about which you are passionate, such as a specific disease, and choose the realm in which you wish to work (benchwork, clinical trials, educational programs, global ophthalmology, etc.). Before initiating your project, it is of great value to conduct a search of the published literature on your topic of interest. This allows you to familiarize yourself with progress that has already been made in that field and can help you to identify aspects that have yet to be explored. After you have selected your unique focus, the key is to strive toward becoming an expert on that topic.

Building your reputation stems from sharing your work with the community. It is important to set goals for each stage of your projects so that you can prepare updates to present at annual meetings. Delivering oral presentations at smaller meetings, academic institutions, or through webinars is a way to highlight your findings and create forums for discussion.

When you submit an abstract, allow time for you and your team to compose and later revise your submission. Ultimately, contributing to the scientific community through publications

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Join committees and societies to get involved, informed, and noticed.
- ▶ Seek out what's interesting to you and become the expert; know your topic and share your knowledge.
- ▶ Find a mentor who can guide you toward opportunities in your field for presenting and developing research; as you advance, you can then in turn be a mentor to others.

is the cornerstone to establishing your expertise in your chosen field.

When you communicate your interests and end goals to your mentors, they can help guide you on the submission and presentation processes.

VOLUNTEERING

In addition to attending and presenting at meetings, consider joining a committee and taking on a designated role. Actively participating on a committee year after year will not only demonstrate your dedication to the field but may also introduce you to senior members who may invite you to partake in other committees or activities. As you establish your presence among your colleagues, opportunities to take on leadership roles may arise, such as organizing meetings, inviting speakers, and constructing panel discussions.

MENTORING

Throughout your career, your mentors play an important part in

paving your way to speaking roles. As a mentee, you look to your career mentors for advice on meetings to attend and opportunities to become involved. Express your interests to them, including presenting your work at meetings, as your mentors may be able to help you through their roles in meeting organizations or on planning committees. As you rise through the professional ranks, and when your path to the podium has already been paved, you can then take on a mentorship role yourself. Trainees or recently specialized ophthalmologists may wish to learn about your work and to take on positions in your ongoing projects. By promoting these junior colleagues, you can not only improve your own contributions to the field but also help them to foster their own independent projects. If you are unable to attend a meeting, you can send a junior colleague or mentee in your place to gain experience in presenting and a wider recognition from those in your field.

CONCLUSION

As you progress along the pathway of your career, it is important to remain proactive. Partake in ongoing activities in your subspecialty, investigate subject areas that intrigue you, and become the expert. By building your career with these steps, you'll be able to succeed in your career path and make your way to the podium. ■

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