

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

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Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

Obstetrics and Gynecology: Reasons Residents Enter the Specialty

In a study of obstetrics and gynecology residents, participants were asked to rate the most appealing aspects of the specialty. The factors are presented below in descending order of importance. Participants were also asked to rate the factor on a five point scale in terms of importance with 5 being most important.

- 1** Surgical opportunities (4.7)
- 2** Variety of clinical experience in day-to-day practice (office/surgery/labor unit) (4.6)
- 3** Fast-paced/high-acuity experiences (4.3)
- 4** Obstetric opportunities (4.2)
- 5** Opportunity to be a women's health advocate (4.1)
- 6** Variety of patient problems (4.0)
- 7** Opportunity to have influence on public health
- 8** Healthy patients (3.6)
- 9** Female patients (3.6)
- 10** Primary care opportunities (3.4)
- 11** Postresidency fellowship opportunities (3.4)
- 12** Academic opportunities (3.1)
- 13** Research opportunities (2.6)
- 14** Potential income (2.6)
- 15** Prestige (2.2)
- 16** Lifestyle (2.0)

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Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

Obstetrics and Gynecology: Reasons Applicants Find the Specialty Appealing

In a study of residency applicants, participants were asked to identify the most appealing aspects of obstetrics and gynecology as a specialty. The most appealing aspects are presented below in descending order (the percentage of participants ranking the factor as most appealing is in parentheses):

- 1** Obstetrics (31%)
- 2** Surgery (28%)
- 3** Female patients only (19%)
- 4** Variety of practice (10%)
- 5** Primary care (8%)
- 6** Family planning/public health (2%)

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35 Obstetricians/Gynecologists Offer Reasons Why They Chose the Specialty

1

“I love it. I guess it came as a result of working for an inner city hospital and doing baby deliveries left and right. I had a lot of empathy and compassion for my patients and it was nice seeing those kids again over the years. I like taking care of people. I get to go to other countries to do medical work. It’s a great field. It’s a life-giving field.”¹

Dr. Josine Veca

2

“As a medical student, I enjoyed most rotations; they were interesting, patient focused and varied. During obstetrics and gynecology, however, I really appreciated the privilege of my role as a doctor. I enjoyed being involved in such poignant times in a patient’s life; a dynamic patient demographic, unified by raw humanity. My early experiences on labor ward and operating room molded my understanding of human physiology and the impact our profession has on the lives of otherwise healthy individuals; implanting in me a desire to pursue a career that can also provide support to the developing world and impact on the lives of large numbers of women and babies. This exposure was under the supervision of passionate, esteemed consultants; inspirational clinicians who opened my eyes to the opportunities a career in obstetrics and gynecology can provide.”²

Dr. Suzy Duckworth

3

“Due to the variable nature of a job in obstetrics and gynecology, one’s communication skills and ability to adapt are further put to the test in situations of emergency, stress or high emotion. Only in obstetrics and gynecology are you called to explain to a young, tired and frightened woman the risks and benefits of a forthcoming operation, even as you rush to theatre with staff and alarms buzzing frantically around you. Later in the relative calm of the clinic, you must explain the ramifications of newly diagnosed infertility, or ovarian cancer, or fetal abnormality. A different patient, with a different problem, in a different setting, every time: never the same day in this profession and always the chance to learn more about people and yourself.”³

Dr. Harry Gibson

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

4

“In gynecology I saw a specialty which combined complex and extensive surgeries with proactive measures to reduce ill health, such as the cervical screening program. I also found that as well as the practical clinical opportunities offered in gynecology there are many other challenges too. In particular this specialty requires excellent communication skills to manage a variety of difficult consultations, from simply gaining the trust of patients for intimate histories and procedures to the delivery of bad news such as ovarian cancer. I found this specialty to be both clinically interesting and professionally challenging....To me Obstetrics and gynecology is a vibrant specialty; it tracks the intensity, struggles and spectrum of the human experience from conception and new birth to healthy life, ill health and finally to death. It offers a rich selection of clinical activities from complex surgeries, multiple areas of medicine, opportunities for research and the unique study of the union of mother and child in pregnancy and birth. I have been challenged and inspired by obstetrics and gynecology and I am certain that this will continue as I move further into the field.”⁴

Dr. Annabel Harbridge

5

“There are tremendous rewards to being involved with people during some of the most precious periods in their life: during their pregnancies, before, during and after surgery, at the ends of life when faced with devastating cancer. And yet, we are a specialty that lives and thrives on hope. The specialty is a wonderful combination of internal medicine and surgery. With the diverse practice styles available, there is room for the thinker, the one who likes to spent time really researching a problem; as well as a doer- the individual who likes to get in there and get it done, operate, save a life, whatever. There is a great deal of emphasis on humanism and compassion in OBGYN. There is ample opportunity to become an individual's most loved Doctor.”⁵

Dr. Sujata Chandra

6

“Obstetrics and gynecology has often been described as a mixture of medicine and hands-on surgery, and this combination is undoubtedly a major appeal for many doctors. The specialty has developed into several distinct subspecialties: as a consultant, you could work across a range of different areas or work in one particular field, such as infertility, maternal and fetal medicine, gyne-oncology, or urogynecology. Whatever you choose to do, a career in obstetrics and gynecology is flexible, exciting, and rewarding. It is a privilege to look after a generally well young patient population at a happy time in their lives. Sometimes it may be demanding and stressful, but the specialty is diverse and challenging.”⁶

BMJ Careers

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

7

“Obstetrics and Gynaecology is particularly appealing because it allows doctors to maintain an interest in both medicine and surgery. That’s certainly why I chose it. It’s a wonderful specialty, with something to offer almost everyone. You can develop expertise in the most sophisticated, technically demanding procedures – if you choose. On the obstetric side, you spend a lot of time looking after women who are not ill, but going through a life event. And in gynecology, you can make a real difference to women with problems such as menorrhagia and urinary incontinence. A great many of the diseases we treat are now curable, including a large proportion of gynecological cancers.”⁷

Professor Allan Templeton

8

“I always knew I wanted to do something surgical; I love working with my hands. But general surgery lacked the patient contact and follow-up that I enjoyed. OB/GYN offered the best of both worlds. Initially, I had planned to do a fellowship in Gyn Oncology, but my interests changed to family planning during my second and third year of residency...It’s a versatile job with a lot of variety. I get to do things in clinic, minimally invasive procedures/surgery and major abdominal operations. I even get to be a radiologist from time to time. Plus, I have innumerable opportunities to educate patients, students, residents and lay people regarding health and gender equity issues.”⁸

Dr. Christopher Estes

9

“The reason I became an OB/GYN all starts back to when I was doing my medical school rotations. I originally thought I was going to be an internal medicine doctor. Started my OB/GYN rotation not thinking too much about it and then, you know, as the rotation went on I started developing relationships with my patients. There was one patient in particular, very traumatic history. She had had a history of an ectopic pregnancy so she had lost one of her tubes and one of her ovaries so making her chances of conceiving a lot less likely. She got pregnant. She had her other ovary out of two. I was there with her during her labor process and watching her push and when that baby was born and I saw the happiness on their face and the joy in that room and the baby coming out and it was when I decided to become an OB/GYN. That’s when I decided that I wanted to help women like her and make a difference in someone’s life. Delivering a child is one of the greatest moments in anyone’s lives. It’s very special that a patient feels that they can share this moment, this event in their lives with me. Delivering their baby, seeing the joy on their faces, seeing that baby cry, come out screaming, seeing a new life in this world is something that most people will never get to experience and I feel very privileged that I am able to experience that with the patient.”⁹

Dr. Zarine Kotian

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

10

“I knew immediately that I wanted to be an obstetrician-gynecologist. As a medical student on my second night on call in labor and delivery, I pestered the attending doctors to let me deliver a baby, and six hours later I got my chance. With the guidance of a senior doctor, a plump, slippery, wriggling baby appeared in my hands. My adrenaline ran so fast that my hands shook when I clamped and cut the cord. I passed the infant to the pediatricians and was hooked.”¹⁰

Dr. Alexander Friedman

11

“As far back as I can remember I have wanted to be a doctor. There is a lot of opportunity to help people. The field of ob/gyn offers a little bit of everything. We provide primary care to a lot of women so we get to see patients for a long period of time. We get to know them and their families and see them through many of their life events. One aspect I was drawn to was that the majority of problems that we see and treat are fixable. Even a lot of cancers in this area can be detected early so we can cure the patient and that is very satisfying. A lot of nonmalignant problems, such as pelvic prolapse and excessive bleeding, we can fix, making a big difference in a woman’s life. Obstetrics is a whole different world and to be privileged to share in a pregnancy and birth is always extremely rewarding. Since 99 percent of deliveries turn out just fine, it is a very happy field. In the past 10 years, there have been an incredible number of innovations so we’ve been able to help women get back to doing what they want to do without disrupting their busy lives any more than necessary.”¹¹

Dr. Hugo Ribot

12

“There are a number of things I love about my job. I love the relationships I develop with my patients in the office. I have a number of patients I’ve been following for several years, whom I’ve operated on, and who come back to me for care. I love the continuity of getting to see them repeatedly for whatever comes up. I also love to operate--this is what gets me up in the morning. There is nothing more satisfying (I find) than taking someone to the operating room and being able to solve their problems. Obviously, it’s not always that straightforward--surgery does not cure everything, and you have to know who is a good candidate for surgery and who isn’t. But it is one of the key reasons I chose gyn/ob.”¹²

Dr. Dana Gossett

13

“Our profession is truly a blessing and a privilege. This field includes the opportunity to promote overall health and well-being to women, provide support in the various stages of women’s health, and advise women in one of the most private and intimate areas of their personal well being. I cannot imagine

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

another field that would satisfy my interests in science, service, and skill. It is not only a career but a calling to devote one's self to women's health."¹³

Jessica McClintock, M.D.

14

"I sought out clinical experience prior to applying to medical school. I obtained employment as a Medical Assistant in a thriving urban obstetrics and gynecology practice, where I worked with accomplished medical providers, physicians, nurses, and physician assistants. I remember following my first patient from her very first OB visit to the day of her delivery and realizing this is what I wanted to do with my life. Seeing patients on a regular basis for prenatal care and getting to know them and their family is constantly rewarding. Going into the field of gynecology provides me with the opportunity to educate and to practice preventative medicine. I enjoyed so much caring, helping not only bringing new life into the world, but taking care of females like myself."¹⁴

Samar Merriman, M.D.

15

"Obstetrics is fascinating because it is as much an art as a science. The field offers one the opportunity to make decisions in a matter of seconds under pressure that can greatly affect outcomes. Yet even with all the modern day advances in technology, sometimes one may only be able to hold a hand in need or console."¹⁵

Yadira Rafuls, M.D.

16

"I initially chose to pursue a career in Ob/Gyn because of the unique combination of both medicine and surgery. As I started my residency and became more exposed to the field, I began to appreciate the unique relationship Ob/Gyns have with their patients. Patients come to you in their most vulnerable state and trust you to guide them through some of the best, and sometimes the worst, experiences of their lives. A compassionate and competent Ob/Gyn can positively impact a woman's self confidence in addition to her health and can greatly increase the quality of a woman's life. This makes the field a very rewarding one."¹⁶

Stefanie Rodwell, M.D.

17

Bringing babies into the world is, quite simply, awe-inspiring. I love it. It is so special and intimate, that moment when a family is born (and re-born), and I feel privileged to be a part of it...I like to *fix* things. I am, at heart, a fixer. I want to change things for the better, and being an Ob/Gyn allows me to do this more often than not. I find this infinitely satisfying when I can make things better through surgery or medical treatment...I enjoy the continuity of care that being an Ob/Gyn affords. I love being able to

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

deliver multiple babies for the same patient, and then be able to take care of their Gyn needs once childbearing is over. I like the lasting relationships the field can foster...I like to do Gyn surgery. General surgery, to me, was overwhelming, but Gyn surgery affords me the ability to do a variety of cases in a limited area of the anatomy. The perfectionist in me enjoys the focus on one organ system, but there is always good enough variety to keep it interesting...Procedures are fun. Not just surgeries, but colposcopies, LEEPs, IUD insertions, polyp removals, and endometrial biopsies are all very enjoyable, and the results are often immediately evident. Highly satisfactory...The patients. That's right, for all that they do to drive me crazy, it's the patients that keep me coming back for more. Be it the infertile woman that I helped to conceive, or the anemic, miserable woman whose ills were cured by a simple procedure or surgery, or even the chronic pain patient who got the correct diagnosis, treatment, and subsequent improved quality of life. I do this for the patients, plain and simple.¹⁷

Dr. Whoo

18

"For me, there is no area of medicine more positive and rewarding than obstetrics and gynecology. I'm able to build lasting relationships and help my patients through the most important times of their lives. Many patients have trusted me from their first exam on. I've cared for them through pregnancy, childbirth and through all the changes they've gone through. Knowing that I'm dependable and trustworthy for my patients and their families is incredibly meaningful for me. The specialty of women's medicine also requires me to stay on the leading edge, which I appreciate. We're now able to cure or improve many problems with advanced treatments that are easier for patients than ever. The challenge of learning new approaches and mastering the best techniques is enjoyable to me as a physician."¹⁸

Dr. Dominic Cammarano

19

"This specialty is a good combination of the challenges of surgery and the thought processes of internal medicine. This specialty is very satisfying. I have the unique opportunity to build a special bond with a woman and her family. I become an extended family member. From the gynecology side, he enjoys performing minimally invasive procedures that help patients recover faster and get back to their busy lifestyles."¹⁹

Dr. Roger Boatwright

20

"I feel privileged to be involved in some of the most intimate and emotional experiences in our female patients' lives. The relationships forged during childbirth through menopause and beyond makes the

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

practice of Obstetrics and Gynecology rewarding. It is exciting to help women implement new and innovative ways of managing these situations."²⁰

Dr. Carlos Alarcon

21

"I immensely enjoy the field of obstetrics and gynecology. It encompasses medicine, surgery, obstetrics and pathology-but with a strong emphasis on healthy well care that affords me the chance to educate patients about their health now and in the future."²¹

Dr. Jill Holden

22

"Working with women of all ages has been incredibly empowering and rewarding. A passion from early on in my training has been to educate and facilitate healthy living practices so that women of all ages and situations learn and maintain productive and active lives. I consider caring for a woman and her family through conception and pregnancy a privilege and an honor. Ultimately, I strive to be a learned listener, a compassionate practitioner and a pro-active partner in developing and maintaining the best health for all my patients."²²

Dr. Tanya Huang

23

"I enjoy the diversity of working with women of all ages. Each stage of a woman's life, from the teenage to menopausal years, offers unique challenges and opportunities to educate and empower women to make healthy life choices. It is a privilege to guide women through pregnancy and to be a part of such an important milestone. I feel as an Ob-Gyn, my role is to partner with patients to promote their health and the reward is the long term relationships I develop with the patients and their families."²³

Dr. Maureen Tart

24

"During medical school, I found that I loved to be in the operating room. Therefore, I went on to spend a year in General Surgery. During that year, I found taking care of women was much more rewarding. After careful consideration, I felt Obstetrics and Gynecology gave me the opportunity to combine my joy of operating and caring for women."²⁴

Dr. Cindy Basinski

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

25

“I chose the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology because I liked the combination of surgery and primary care for women. The first baby I ever delivered was at the Cambridge Hospital as a medical student over 20 years ago - and after that I was hooked on the specialty. I feel it is an honor to become part of the lives of the women I care for. I am always impressed by the strength and resiliency of women in the face of illness.”²⁵

Dr. Kathleen Harney

26

“I was drawn to medicine because I wanted to make a difference. As an OB/GYN, I have had the privilege of caring for women and their families and hearing amazing stories in the process. Being present at a delivery makes you part of the family story – and that has never gotten old.”²⁶

Dr. Bob Berry

27

“I was strongly attracted to the field of OB/GYN because I wanted to have an impact on the lives of women and their families. The potential for long term relationships with patients through their child bearing years and beyond is particularly gratifying. I enjoy interacting with patients during the uniquely joyous and vulnerable experience of giving birth. I also like helping women through gynecological transitions such as peri-menopause.”²⁷

Dr. Sarah Crane

28

“I decided to specialize in OB/GYN because it is a field that allows me to help women and encourage them to be healthy. I like that I see a wide variety of patients with different needs. As an OB/GYN, I can provide care in the office or in the operating room doing surgery. I am always amazed to find that most women have a great sense of humor regardless of what may be happening in their lives.”²⁸

Dr. Davina Franco

29

“I became an OB/GYN physician because I believe women should receive good, quality healthcare and need to be empowered to safeguard their health. The desire to improve women’s health led to my passion

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

for the field of OB/GYN. In OB/GYN, more than any other field of medicine, patients come to their doctor with their most personal and intimate concerns at the most vulnerable points of their lives. Trust is one of the most important factors in this relationship and I do not take this responsibility lightly. The most important thing to me is to make sure my patients feel valued, safe, and understood.”²⁹

Dr. Marianne Muchura

30

“I enjoy being an OB/GYN physician because I get to care for women in many different settings - the office, labor & delivery, and the operating room. I've had the opportunity to care for women of different cultures while working with the Indian Service at the Tohono O'Odham Nation in Arizona, and with the Alaska Native Medical Center. That has been a powerful and influential experience. I like that my job gives me an opportunity to advocate for the women I see in my practice.”³⁰

Dr. Jennifer Retsinas

31

“I became an OB/GYN doctor because I like the breadth of the specialty - being able to treat women of all ages from childhood to post-menopause. I also enjoy that as an OB/GYN, I can practice both medicine and surgery. Women are often the glue that holds families together but many women put their own needs last. I am delighted to be able to put women's needs first, showing them how important it is to remain healthy.”³¹

Dr. Tara Singh

32

“Being an OB/GYN doctor is the ideal profession for me - I'm able to work with patients who are highly motivated and interested in their own healthcare and treatment options. I feel very comfortable around women patients and appreciate the feeling of trust and confidence they place in me. I get to go home every day feeling like I've helped some people, and done some good.”³²

Dr. Art Spector

33

“I enjoy working in OB/GYN because I get to work with women in need of acute care, surgery, and ongoing outpatient primary care. I like helping women during important and life-changing times and I find it very rewarding when I can get women to talk about concerns they are afraid to share with others.”³³

Dr. Marielle Stephens

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

34

When I did my obstetrics and gynecology rotation, I found the experience so joyful. The majority of the time, you are dealing with young and healthy patients. You take care of someone for nine months, deliver her baby, and in that family's eyes, you are forever a hero. It's very rewarding. Sometimes we do get tragic cases, but they are few and far between."³⁴

Dr. Hamid Sanjaghsaz

35

"I realized that I didn't want to deal with chronic life-threatening illnesses. I wanted to be in a part of medicine that was more uplifting. I'm glad there are people who want to take care of me when I'm really sick, but that wasn't what spoke to my heart. Delivering babies is the coolest thing in the world. It's fun most of the time. It's a great experience for the family, for the doctors, for the nurses. Who wouldn't want to do that?"³⁵

Dr. David A. Forstein

Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

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Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?

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Why Obstetrics and Gynecology?