



Working in Germany

The problem is well known: money is short, money-saving strategies are about to be implemented virtually everywhere. The situation of worsening working conditions has led to an emigration of German doctors to the UK, Scandinavia, Austria and to the Emirates. As a consequence there is currently a general lack of doctors in this country, which attracts people from other countries, especially Eastern Europe, to work in Germany.

Motivation

Due to the limited offer of training posts for junior doctors in Austria I decided to move abroad after graduating from Vienna University in 2002. After having worked in Great Britain for 18 months, which was an experience of great value, I took a job in Salzburg for one year, after which I left my home country again to be with my boyfriend who lives in Hamburg.

Current Post

I have been working as a doctor in specialist training in Paediatrics in Stade, which is close to Hamburg, for almost a year. It is a 538 bed district hospital, 59 beds are paediatric including a paediatric intensive care unit and Neonatology unit. The department

consists of 11 doctors in training, 2 specialists, and 1 chief consultant. As the south east area of Hamburg is sparsely populated, the hospital has a big catchment area and thus the range of clinical patterns is indeed wide.

Working as a Doctor/ Working Conditions

After the abolition of the AIP ("Arzt im Praktikum") three years ago, German junior doctors enter their specialist training right after graduating from university. It takes five to six years, depending on the subject (e.g. Internal Medicine six years, Paediatrics five years, General Practice five years) and there are virtually no "Gegenfächer".

There is a lot of discussion about the working conditions in the German healthcare system not only for doctors but for the entire hospital staff.

Describing the situation of a doctor in training: There is a lot of change in the



Dr. Raffaella Hammerl

modality of duties almost everywhere at the moment. Trying to abandon 24 hrs shifts and more, most of the departments are working in shorter shifts now. For this reason there are many training posts coming up at the moment, because such a shift system needs about 40% more doctors. Most contracts do not include after-hour payment, but it is possible to take

compensatory leave. After-hours are not always fully compensated. Shifts and on-call duties are sometimes quite long and that leads to long periods of compensatory leave, which is a good point. There is a high work load as there are less doctors working at daytime than previously, meaning that one doctor is responsible for more patients at a time. As a consequence there might be prolonged waiting periods for patients which may result in bad mood and complaints. Dealing with bureaucratic stuff, such as medical letters can seem quite hopeless and frustrating at times for someone used to the pragmatic Austrian way of dealing with paperwork. Often this cannot be done during official working hours due to the high workload. In contrast to Austria, junior doctors are given a lot of responsibility soon in their career, which is important. Senior support is very helpful and a lot of emphasis is put on teaching in my department. There is

always time to ask questions and once a week there is an official teaching session.

Salaries and remuneration – junior doctor: before tax: €3,000, after tax €1,700, no "Urlaubs- or Weihnachtsgeld", Specialists: €4,300–€5,600 before tax.

Application

To apply for a job send a detailed covering letter, your curriculum vitae, a photo and enclose any written certificate. Often speculative applications stand a good chance to be successful, even if there is no previous medical experience, as there is a high turnover of doctors and there are many new posts coming up in all specialties due to a change to the shift system. Many jobs are also announced on the internet on the websites listed below. It is difficult to get a job in the big popular cities like Hamburg, Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart, but much easier in the surroundings and in the east of Germany. Once you found a job, prepare yourself for long negotiations with the local medical chamber about the type of registration.

In summary, I have not regretted having moved to Germany. The disadvantages, like low salaries, long working hours, high work load, and the burden of German bureaucracy, are outweighed by a good quality medical training, a good and motivating and also helpful spirit within the medical team and – last but not least – a lot of spare time. I am now planning to finish my specialist training in this country.

Dr. Raffaella Hammerl



www.bundesaerztekammer.de

The German medical association, provides an excellent site "how to apply in Germany"

www.aerzteblatt.de

German medical journal, search for posts, important news and changes

www.marburger-bund.de

The trade union for medical doctors in Germany with voluntary membership

www.hamburg.de

Important and interesting facts about the pearl of the north

www.abendblatt.de

This regional journal gives an overview about life, upcoming events, culture etc in Hamburg and the region good for job search

www.goinginternational.org

Set the course for your career! Information on 2,500 master programmes, workshops, courses, and conferences offered by more than 700 internationally renowned universities and institutions of higher education.