



A Career in Paediatrics

I like tiny humans

Paediatricians are doctors who manage medical conditions affecting babies, infants, children and young people.

Why did I choose Paediatrics as a Career?

My mother Dr Subhash Sharma was a Paediatrician and strongly influenced my choice to become a paediatrician and neonatologist. She was born in Pakistan in the 1940s and was left behind in Pakistan during Partition. She was rescued by a Pakistani gentleman raised till she was 12 and sent to be with her parents in India in 1951. At the time she could not read or write. She studied and passed her A levels in 1956 and was selected to do medicine in 1957. She could not read or write English at the time as she was trained in Urdu but worked hard to learn the language to train in medicine. She passed her MBBS in 1964 and chose a career in Paediatrics. I once asked her why.

She told me that she wanted to heal children and got immense satisfaction in working with kids. The spectrum involved babies who don't talk to you to teens who also sometimes don't talk to you. The challenges are immense, and the rewards are plenty. As a child, I spent a lot of time with her and saw how gentle and patient she was with her patients. She worked long hours but at the end of the day, she felt very happy and fulfilled. She did her research on childhood Tuberculosis. She worked in India, Nigeria, Australia and New Guinea and had a fulfilling career spanning half a century.

Be prepared for a long training programme

Becoming a paediatrician requires many years of hard work and tons of smarts.

If you enjoy working with children and can pass organic chemistry, you are among the elite group qualified to become paediatricians. Expect to train a minimum of seven years post-undergraduate, or longer if you want to specialize in the UK. In the US and Canada, you will need to do 3-4 years of residency and if you would like to specialize then you will need to train for at least 3 more years. In Australia, you will need to train for 3-4 years to complete your FRACP and specialization after that can vary from between 3-5 years depending on the field of specialization. In India, you complete 3 years including a year of research toward a Paediatrics PG qualification. Further super specialization is possible with a DM or DNB. In Egypt, you will need to do your master's degree which is usually 4 years in Paediatrics. In Pakistan, you will need to complete 4 years of training doing an FCPS degree. Further specialization is through a fellowship.

Pros and cons of becoming a paediatrician

Becoming a paediatrician takes a lot of time, effort, and in western countries money. While it can be a fulfilling and lucrative career, it's certainly not for everyone. Here are some pros and cons to consider if you're thinking about becoming a paediatrician.

Pros of becoming a paediatrician

- **Helping children:** Many people choose to enter the medical profession to help others. Treating kids impacted by an illness, accident, or other diagnoses can be very satisfying.
- **Positively influencing the youth:** Not all pediatric specializations require dealing with critically ill kids. Some are geared towards fostering healthy habits, such as getting immunizations, exercising, and improving diet. It's not all doom and gloom.
- **Inspirational patients:** Kids can smile and laugh through all sorts of difficulties and can bounce back from hard times faster than many adults. It can be amazing to witness.
- **Prestige:** A lot of people will respect the work you do—as they should.
- **Pay:** In the US, On average, [paediatricians](#) \$183,240 per year. Those working in outpatient care centers earn closer to \$200,000 annually, while those working in specialist hospitals earn over \$200,00 per year. In the [UK salaries](#) start at about £78000 and rise over 10-20 years to about 13000 pounds annually. In [Australia](#), salaries vary but an average of between Australian \$220000 to 280000 is quoted.

Cons of becoming a paediatrician

- **Watching children suffer:** While empathetic doctors will have a hard time seeing any kind of patient suffering, seeing kids in pain or dying can take an even greater emotional toll. You'll need to be able to compartmentalize to endure in this profession.
- **Communication:** Kids can't always express their needs or feelings. You must have an excellent understanding of medicine and pediatric illnesses to diagnose a child accurately. This is especially true with infants and toddlers who can't articulate how they feel.
- **Dealing with parents:** Interacting with parents/caregivers can be difficult since some will understandably be stressed and upset. Paediatricians must have lots of patience to navigate these situations.