

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program accessible on the ReachMD network. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/locumtenens/how-a-radiologist-achieved-work-life-balance-through-locum-tenens/918/>

ReachMD

www.reachmd.com
info@reachmd.com
(866) 423-7849

How a Radiologist Achieved Work-Life Balance Through Locum Tenens

Narrator:

You're Listening to Spotlight On Locum Tenens on ReachMD in partnership with Locumstory-dot-com.

Dr. Kaskel:

Near perfect work and life balance, how many of us can say we have it, let alone come close to having it? Locum tenens opportunities are letting more and more doctors be in the driver's seat when it comes to designing their dream life.

Welcome to The Business of Medicine. I'm your host, Dr. Larry Kaskel. Joining me today is Dr. Betsy Tieman, a board certified radiologist who left private practice where she was working 14 hours a day to take advantage of temporary physician opportunities, which also enabled her to train and compete in triathlons.

Welcome to the show, Dr. Tieman.

Dr. Tieman:

Thank you, Larry.

Dr. Kaskel:

I'm wondering, Betsy, how did you first hear about locum tenens work?

Dr. Tieman:

I had spoken to one of my former staff doctors who I worked with under residency at Tulane, and he was doing some locums work after he left the academic world, and he told me a bit about it. And I had seen ads, of course, in the journals.

Dr. Kaskel:

What did it do for you? What made you decide to chuck traditional medicine and kind of hit the road?

Dr. Tieman:

I discovered I was pretty burnt out and was still relatively early in my career. I was right around the age of 40, and I thought that was too early to be so exhausted from doing what I was doing. Our group took a lot of call. We covered several busy hospitals. And between being on call and therefore being up all night and working the next day, I was tired all the time. And part-time wasn't an option with this particular group, so I said that's it and I'm going to find something that works better for me.

Dr. Kaskel:

Excellent. Good for you. So you stuck it to the man.

Dr. Tieman:

I did, sort of.

Dr. Kaskel:

So, what was your first job on the road? Where did you first go?

Dr. Tieman:

My first job on the road was spring of 2005. I believe I either went to Odessa, Texas, or I went up to Oregon, and I can't remember which one was first, actually.

Dr. Kaskel:

That's okay. That's the life—that's the life of a vagabond doctor.

Dr. Tieman:

It's true. It's true. There's been several places, but it was—it was very exciting. It was nerve-racking in a way to step into something new, as any new job would be, but I get to step into a new job several times a year, so it's exciting, but it makes you a little bit nervous, but it turns out to be really fun, and I can't say that there's any job I've ever done that I wouldn't go back to.

Dr. Kaskel:

That's pretty positive that there have been no locations or placements that you weren't happy with.

Dr. Tieman:

There was a few that started out a little bit rough around the edges, either with logistics or some of the—just taking care of paperwork or the way that the computer systems worked and I wasn't really getting it right off, but every single place, within the week after I started a location, all of that would get ironed out, and it would turn out to be fun again.

Dr. Kaskel:

How many hours, Betsy, are you working now as compared to your 14-hour days prior?

Dr. Tieman:

Fourteen-hour days is average. I just want to clarify that, so in case anybody hears this, they think that I'm not exaggerating. It would be 14 days (sic) average with call, etc. I work 8-hour days when I'm working. I rarely take call. Usually, if it's a call it's a backup kind of situation. I work very, very few weekends, and I work about 24–26 weeks a year, and I love it.

Dr. Kaskel:

What are you doing when you're not at work? What's your—what's your other passion?

Dr. Tieman:

I'm usually out on my bike or out running, and I participate in triathlon. And, in fact, I leave in less than a week to go to Ironman Austria.

Dr. Kaskel:

Wow.

Dr. Tieman:

So I'm really excited about that.

Dr. Kaskel:

That is exciting. So you can take off a month at a time if you want.

Dr. Tieman:

I can.

Dr. Kaskel:

And you probably have.

Dr. Tieman:

And I have. In fact, this last month while I've been doing the last bit of preparation for the race I worked 1 week.

Dr. Kaskel:

Betsy, are you single or married?

Dr. Tieman:

I am single.

Dr. Kaskel:

So, do you think that has something to do with your freedom and your ability to just kind of do your own thing?

Dr. Tieman:

I think it helps, although most of the other locum tenens physicians that I have worked with, at one location in particular, are married, and they either travel away and come back to see their wives on the weekends or they bring them with them, and I've met several of the wives and...

Dr. Kaskel:

You can understand why the doctor wants to be away from them.

Dr. Tieman:

No, actually, they're very—they're very nice ladies, but I can see the flexibility obviously is one of the key factors for being a locums doctor, and obviously the spouse. But if you have the chance to take your spouse to a cool location, why not? Then you're working and you get a little fun and a little sightseeing, and that's been another one of the really joys of this entire experience.

Dr. Kaskel:

Dr. Tieman, what about those things called children? Have you seen any of those on the road?

Dr. Tieman:

I have not.

Dr. Kaskel:

So it's probably... I mean, it sounds like it's great if you've got grown children or at least super little kids that you can move around with, but once they're in school, it's probably not a great idea for a doctor to be, you know, dragging his kids all around the world.

Dr. Tieman:

I wouldn't think so, but I would hesitate to comment on that because I have no experience with that.

Dr. Kaskel:

Excellent answer. Betsy, what have you learned about yourself and about the practice of medicine by doing this type of activity?

Dr. Tieman:

What I've learned is to be flexible and to be adaptable, and I think that's one of the most important things that a locum tenens physician can be. You don't want to go into a practice and mold it to how you think an ideal radiology, for instance, practice would be run. They have their routines, so basically you need to come in and fit in because you're just there for a little while.

Dr. Kaskel:

Right, it's not all about you.

Dr. Tieman:

Especially with the jobs I take... I take assignments that are 1–2 weeks in length, so I would never think that I need to take on and change a bunch of protocols or anything like that. I would rather... As long as what I'm getting is quality work and it's diagnostic, I want to fit in with their protocols, and that's been really helpful, and I think that has made me fairly successful at this.

Dr. Kaskel:

Have you ever been in a situation where they're asking you to read a certain type of film that you're not comfortable with and there's no one else to do it??

Dr. Tieman:

Actually, so far there has always been some sort of backup. There are a few things that I don't feel entirely comfortable with, some higher-end MRI studies, some of the neuroradiology studies, and at every location I have been at there has been somebody else to back up.

Dr. Kaskel:

If you've just joined us, you're listening to ReachMD XM 233, the channel for medical professionals. I'm your host, Dr. Larry Kaskel, and I'm talking today with Dr. Betsy Tieman. She's a radiologist and avid locum tenens doctor.

Betsy, where has been the greatest place in the world that you have gone as a result of being a locum tenens doc?

Dr. Tieman:

I have 2 favorites. One of them was Eugene, Oregon, and that was one of the first locations that I went to early on within the first few months after I began doing locums, and I loved the town. It reminded me of Austin where I'm from back before Austin got huge. The medical community there was fabulous. The active community was fabulous. I took a bicycle up there with me and could go riding after work or go running on the trails, and it was wonderful. My other favorite location has been Ketchikan, Alaska, which is just a precious little port town in the southern tip of Alaska. People are great. The technologists love me there, and I love them back. And it's an easy-paced job, but you're doing good work, and you're helping out the people of this community that doesn't have tons of medical support.

Dr. Kaskel:

You get to be a doctor, and you don't have to worry about all of the other headaches surrounding it.

Dr. Tieman:

Exactly. Politics is not my forte, and I'm happy to stay out of that. I will give an opinion when asked, sometimes not when asked, but again, it all goes back to the flexibility and adaptability and trying to roll with the flow and make the situation work.

Dr. Kaskel:

What happens with any romantic entanglements that may happen on the road? I mean, you're here for 2 weeks or 3 weeks, all the doctors fall in love with you because you're so wonderful, and then you have to leave.

Dr. Tieman:

Well, they don't fall in love with me that way, but I've made friends with people, primarily people that I work with on a day-to-day basis, which would mostly be the technologists. I have not had any romantic entanglements. I've had 1 date on the road. It was just... It is what it is.

Dr. Kaskel:

Besides locations—obviously, Eugene sounds magical, and Ketchikan sounds extremely quaint—what kind of jobs have you had that are memorable? Forgetting the locations, I mean, are there any specific settings you've been in, either a hospital setting versus a private practice setting versus a free clinic, or are they all pretty similar?

Dr. Tieman:

They're not similar, and that's another part of the beauty of it. One of the places that I have been the most often—it's been a recurring thing for over 2 years now—is a medical center hospital in Odessa, Texas. They have been shorthanded radiologists for some time, and it is a busy, busy hospital-based practice. We read over 100 cases a day for each doctor, and they have 5 doctors reading every day. It's busy. There's tons of pathology. There's lots of trauma. It's just, you know, busy, and exciting at times and a little bit stressful at times because you're reading a lot of volume, but it's a lot of everything, and it's a bunch of variety, and that's what drew me to radiology in the first place. And then I can contrast that to say a place like Ketchikan, which is a small general hospital. I read about 60 cases a day, maybe not quite as much big trauma or urgent trauma, and that's a little bit more... It's almost a vacation compared to Odessa. And then I've been to outpatient centers where I read primarily CT and MRI and I'm reading 40 cases a day.

Dr. Kaskel:

Yeah, so there's a lot of variety.

Dr. Tieman:

It varies from place to place, and it's good because it keeps my skills sharp on one hand, but some places I get a little bit of a break and I'm not having to pound out the volume all day, so it's wonderful, and that's the beauty of radiology, and that's the beauty of locums, and tying them together just makes it work wonderfully.

Dr. Kaskel:

I think even with teleradiology now you could probably be anywhere you wanted to be and work as a radiologist.

Dr. Tieman:

For what I wanted to do, I didn't want to have to be tied to a schedule, which one of the companies I had spoken with was going to do, and with my travel for triathlon and travel for fun, it's easier if I can say, "Well, I'm going to work 1 week this month and 3 weeks this month and 2 weeks that month," so I have the freedom doing it the way I'm doing it.

Dr. Kaskel:

You're definitely in the driver's seat.

Dr. Kaskel:

We're about out of time, Dr. Tieman. I was wondering if you would just kind of give us some final thoughts on whether or not the doctors listening out there should all kind of quit their normal practices and hit the road.

Dr. Tieman:

I think if other physicians are not happy with their practice and they don't feel like they have control over their schedule and they don't have a way to balance the rest of their life, being a locum tenens physician is a great option. It's worked for me. I'm traveling around the country now. I have the freedom to travel around the world for triathlon, and it's fabulous.

Dr. Kaskel:

I think on that note we'll leave it, the fabulous life of Dr. Betsy Tieman. I'd like to thank you for coming on the show.

Narrator:

You've been listening to Spotlight on Locum Tenens. To download this program or others from the series, please visit [ReachMD-dot-com-slash-Locum Tenens](https://ReachMD-dot-com-slash-Locum-Tenens). This series is produced in partnership with Locumstory-dot-com. Thank you for listening.

Sponsorship Advertisement:

A lot of physicians have questions about locum tenens.

And locumstory.com is the place for them to get real, unbiased answers to those questions...

Basic questions like, "what is locum tenens?..." to more complex questions about pay ranges, taxes, various specialties, and how locums works for PAs and NPs...And then there's the big question: Is it right for you?

Go to locumstory.com and get the answers.