

# Planning and Completing an Academic Sabbatical

"For in six days, the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Exodus 31:17

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## Outline

- Introduction
- Recognizing need for change
- Planning a sabbatical
- Actually doing it
- Re-entry

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## Objectives

- Advantages and disadvantages
- Common goals for sabbaticals
- Critical planning issues
- Potential threats
- Re-entry

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### The Aging of Faculty

#### Longevity Revolution

Since 1900, life expectancy rose 47→77 yrs  
% Americans over 65 has tripled

By 2025, twice as many workers ≥ 50 yrs than ≤ 25  
*Illmarinen, Occ Med 2005*

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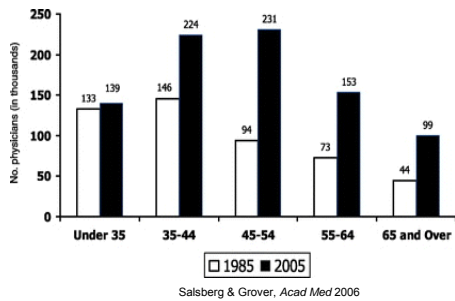
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### Physician Distribution by Age



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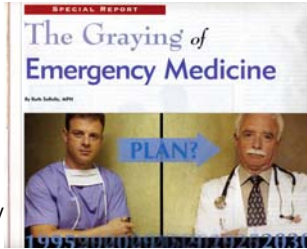
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**The Graying of EM**

41% of EM physicians are ≥ 46 yrs

28% are ≥ 50 yrs

(ACEP data)



How to maintain vitality

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**Recognizing the need for change**

Natural shifting of priorities

Interest in broader and interdisciplinary issues

Desire to facilitate others' success

Focus on something enduring and meaningful

Moving towards something rather than away from something

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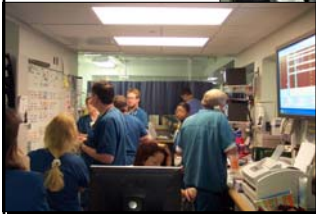
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*You'd have to be a fool,  
to leave all this!*



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**The sabbatical experience**

Definition – a time apart, etc

Usually, a once in a lifetime experience

Often not routinely available, but craftable

Two different forms:

"In place" – describe

"Gone away" – more traditional

Both result in same type of transformative experience

If it's not transformative, then it was just a long vacation

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**More details**

Very little data on sabbaticals

SAEM survey, 1998

< 1/3 have provision for sabbaticals

< 10% of senior faculty have taken one

Bernstein, Acad Emerg Med 1999

Pubmed search back to 1965

~25 relevant hits

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**Planning**

Allow enough time

At least 12 months, likely 2X that

You have to be obsessed / committed

Have a definite purpose – it can't be only to have a sabbatical

It will be a continuous negotiation

Include family, partner up front

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**Planning Issues**

Funding models

- External
- Internal
- Personal / 'sweat equity'

What will the content be?

- Skills / knowledge important
- Developing new personal contacts ultimately more so – so be sure to allow, facilitate
- Develop the site
- Don't recreate your old job in a new place
  - A little teaching, a little practice, a little research – none of it very well

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**More planning**

More issues if you're going away

- Banking
- Place to live
- Moving
- Visas – will you (or anyone) "work"?
- Your house, car, pets, etc
- Medical licensure, if relevant

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**Planning – overcoming common objections**

From your chair:

- We can't afford to be w/o you
  - The graveyards are full of essential people (get image)
- Fear that you won't come back
  - May be well grounded?
  - If you're looking for change, you may leave anyway
    - Why not grant the sabbatical and the corresponding sense of obligation?

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**Planning – overcoming common objections**

From your co-workers:

Generally, a surprise

Mixture of confusion, envy, vicarious pleasure, resentment, abandonment, pity, ...

Current work in progress

Act as if you're not going, until you go

Colleague's reactions

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**Actually doing it – common problems**

Leaving the comfort zone -> being uncomfortable

Family, significant other issues – they will have more discomfort than you

After a while the 'exoticness' of new location wears off

Usually before you 'go native' and feel more at home there than back here

Changes in plans

Be fixed on goals, be flexible on means

Don't recreate your old job in a new place

A little teaching, a little practice, a little research – none of it very well

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**Re-entry**

18 – 24 months

A different person will come back

You will care less

Because you know more what to really care about

Your dept will have done just fine w/o you

Depression is common, frequent p/ sabbatical

Old job will look pretty dull cf your recent exotic experience

Will last longer than you think

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**Start now**



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