Shadowing Guidelines
Do's and Don'ts

Shadowing best practices | the dos

Protect Patients
The safety and privacy of the patients should be your top priority. This means you should only observe without participating in patient care. Protect patient privacy by closing doors behind you, refrain from discussing patient details, and do not use your phone in the patient's room. Read the AAMC's guidelines for shadowing abroad to get more details.

Show Respect
Arrive at the hospital early. This will show respect to the doctors and will give you time to navigate hospital corridors may be confusing at first. Keep in mind that the hospital staff has welcomed you into their busy work environment. The best way you can honor their work space is to treat them with respect. Don't look at your phone if the hospital forbids the use of phones, and never use your phone in a patient's room. Avoid being a distraction or doing anything that will draw unnecessary attention to yourself, such as asking questions while a doctor is interacting with a patient.

Dress Professionally
The dress code for shadowing is business casual. Even if some of the hospital staff is dressed more casually, you will want to show that you are taking this experience seriously. It is important to dress appropriately but also comfortably, as you will be standing most of the day.

Introduce Yourself
As soon as you arrive, make sure to introduce yourself to the doctor (in their language if possible), and let them know that you are a student shadowing with the Atlantis program. Even if you don't know much of their language, they will appreciate the effort. Keep in mind that, while we do our best to inform all the doctors in the hospital about the Atlantis program, it is not always possible for us to communicate to every last person. If you are paired with a doctor who doesn't know about Atlantis, don't get frazzled. Be prepared to give a brief explanation of why you're there, and make a good first impression.

Be Proactive
The doctors you will shadow have a lot on their minds (like saving patients!) and directing you may not be their first priority. The doctor may abruptly walk away with little or no explanation. This may seem awkward, but follow them unless they specifically tell you otherwise. If they tell you that they are leaving (i.e. to go to a meeting or to see another patient), ask if you can join them. Don't wait for them to tell you to come along. If they don't want you to come, they will let you know. If a doctor offers to let you shadow longer, take advantage of it. This may give you an opportunity to see a rare procedure or an interesting surgery that you wouldn't see otherwise.

Be Creative

There will be times during shadowing that feel boring, and you may feel like you have nothing to do. A patient may ask you to step out of the room, a doctor may join a confidential meeting, or doctors may have paperwork to complete. if this happens, you may feel unsure of what do to. This would be a good time to ask hospital staff more open ended questions about healthcare systems or even particular cases from earlier in the day. Don't feel restricted to just talking to doctors. You may gain valuable insight from talking to nurses, residents, or even other students! If there's no one to talk to or observe, take this time to write notes on your observations and make connections to things you've seen or read before. If you're allowed to use your phone, look up unknown terms and/or procedures that you encountered.

Take Notes

Carry a notebook with you to keep track of important medical information and questions to ask later. Also, use this notebook for your own observations, such as patient body language, physical markersof illness, and estimation of patient age/weight. Be sure to keep trackof your experiences in the hospital. This practice will help you when you're trying to describe your program experience in medical school applications and interviews.

Ask Questions (when appropriate)

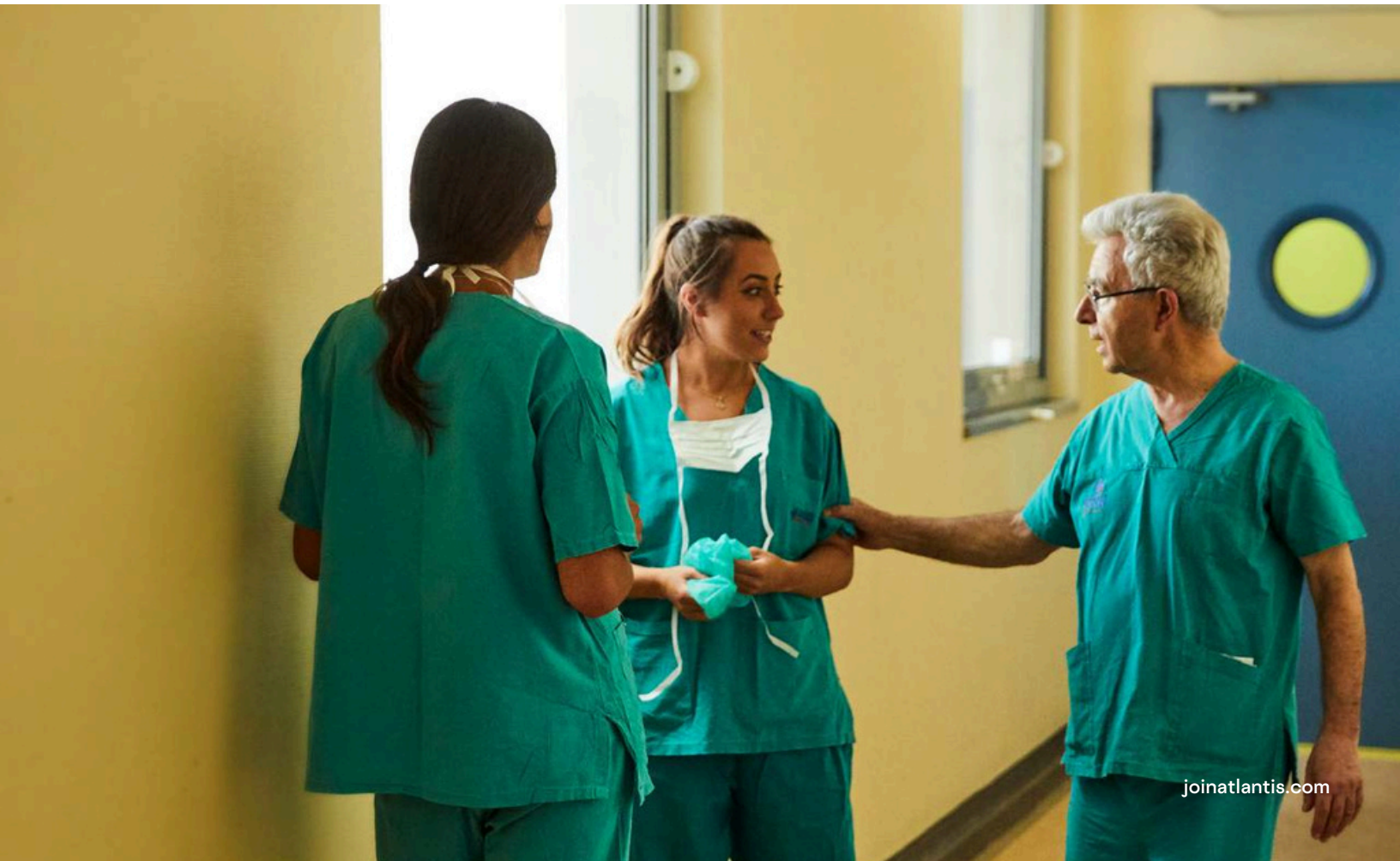
Take advantage of the times when the doctor allows for your questions. Use your notebook to keep track of questions and answers. Its best to ask these after you leave a patient's room or at the end of the day. Asking questions while you're in the room with a patient could interfere with their provision of care.

Eat and Stay Hydrated

To avoid becoming lightheaded throughout the day, be sure to eat a full breakfast in the morning and pack snacks that have plenty of protein. If you start to feel lightheaded, you should lean against a wall or excuse yourself from the room.

Say Thank You

These doctors are not employees of Atlantis. Show gratitude for their generosity by saying "thank you" at the end of each day. You could also give them a handwritten thank you note at the end of your shadowing rotation with them. These personal touches will be appreciated by the doctors who graciously allowed you to shadow them.



What to avoid | the don’ts

Do Not Provide Patient Care

It is important to remember that, in keeping with the ethical guidelines dedicated by the AAMC, you should understand the limits of your role as an observer. As a student observer, you will not be diagnosing diseases, administering medications, performing surgical procedures, suturing, or providing medical advice to patients (even sharing an opinion). Even if the doctor lets you, do not participate in patient care. Since medical education works differently outside the US, the doctors may not be aware that you cannot provide care. You are responsible for making sure that you do not do anything unethical.

Do Not Share Patient Data

Any identifying patient data should be kept strictly confidential. This means that you should not take pictures of patients or take notes of a patient’s name or other identifying details. Protect patient privacy as much as you can. Even if patients and doctors give you expressed consent to take pictures, you may never share these photos in any capacity afterwards.

Do Not Skip Shadowing

The doctors and other hospital staff will be offended if you do not show up. Even if you are not interested in a particular specialty, do not squander the opportunity to discover unexpected interest or learning opportunities. If you ever feel uncomfortable or threatened around a doctor, let your Site Manager know immediately.

Do Not Be Rude

It can be inconvenient for doctors to have students following them. They are being generous with their time and knowledge, so do not take it lightly. Do not show obvious signs of boredom, like scrolling through your phone or rolling your eyes and sighing. Do not interrupt the doctor, and avoid talking while in the room with a patient.

Do Not Walk Where You Shouldn’t

Do not wander into rooms if you haven’t been directed to do so. This can be an invasion of patient privacy. Going into some rooms without the proper protection can even be dangerous (i.e. rooms with active X-Rays). If you are observing surgery, walking into a sterile field can compromise patient safety and may require the doctors and nurses to restart the sterilization process. Ask someone if you are unsure of where to stand.



Critical thinking questions

Interpersonal Relationships

- What is the doctor/patient relationship like? (e.g. parent/child, echnician/client)
- How does the nurse/patient relationship differ from the doctor/patient relationship?
- How do the doctor and nurses relate to each other?
- What is the doctor's relationship to the patient's family? Do they communicate with the patient first or the family?
- How do doctors convey bad news to patients/family?

Nonverbal Communication

- How much eye contact do doctors maintain with others? Is there a differences depending on the person's role?
- How much time do doctors spend talking to patients? Nurses? Other doctors?
- How much space do doctors leave between themselves and patients? What kind of physical contact occurs?
- Does the doctor ever kneel or sit to be at the eye level of patients?
- Does the volume of the doctor's voice change depending on who is being addressed (i.e. other doctors vs. patients, young patients vs. elderly patients)?

Patient's Experience

- How much time do patients spend in the waiting room? Exam room?
- How far in advance do patients have to schedule appointments? Do they get to choose which doctor they want to see?
- Do patients have to pay a copay?
- How flexible are employers if a patient needs to take time off for health reasons? How much time off do people generally get for maternity or paternity leave?

Healthcare System

- Is healthcare universal? What is covered? How is healthcare paid for?
- How independent are individual hospitals? Is there a Ministry of Health and how involved is it in daily care?
- How much time do doctors spend doing paperwork?
- What kind of insurance do most patients have (i.e. Private, government)? How do doctors and hospitals prioritize who gets care?
- How much interaction do the doctors have with their department head?
- How many patients do doctors see a day? What measures does the hospital enact to ensure the privacy of the patient?
- How does the healthcare system approach mental health issues? Is there a stigma around them? Are mental health issues primarily treated from a medical or psychological angle?

Doctor's Experience

- How do the doctors talk about their healthcare system?
- What hours do they generally work? How much time off do they get?
- Do doctors get rewarded or penalized for performance? How is performance measured?
- What was their educational path?
- How long do they intend to stay in medicine?
- Are they happy with their career choice?
- Do many doctors participate in research?
- How much continuing education do doctors receive?



We help build a world where healthcare professionals love their jobs and their patients can sense that. We do this via programs that (a) help put the right people in healthcare and (b) help these people thrive in their field.

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