

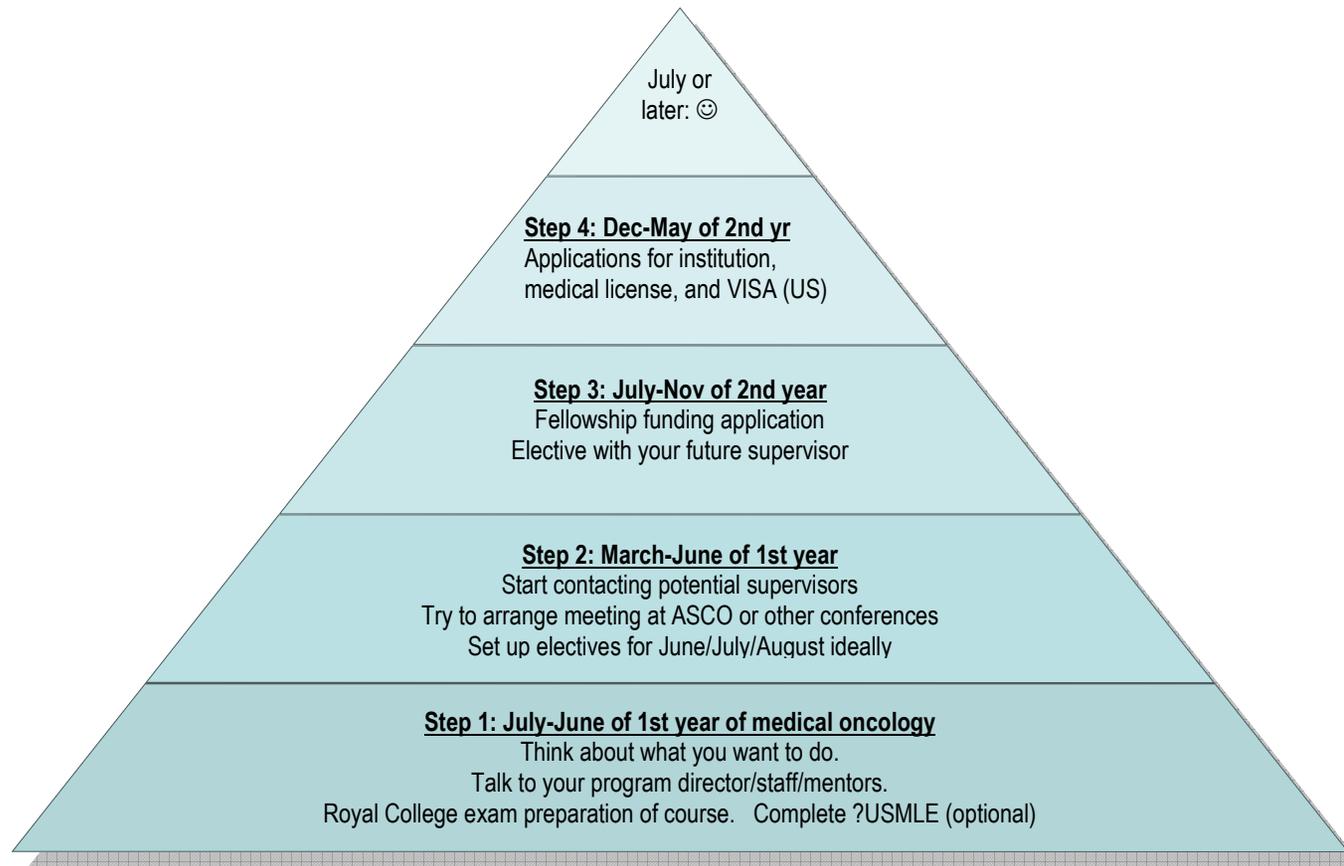
Fellowship Opportunities, Applications and More

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Version 1.0

Fellowship application can be very time consuming and frustrating. While every year a number of oncology residents would apply for fellowships, there exists limited information regarding this complicated process. This guide is built on Dr. Sophie Sun's helpful advice on oncology fellowship, which was first written in 2006. Hopefully, this can provide you with some practical information for your career planning, and save you some time along the way. It would also be greatly appreciated if you can help update and polish this document over the years!

- I. Overall timeline
- II. Choosing a career track
- III. Fellowship supervisor
- IV. Funding application
- V. Fellowship application
- VI. Frequently asked questions

I. Overall timeline (start from bottom moving up)



II. Choosing a career track?

The options include academia (clinical vs. translational research vs. medical education), community oncology, or industry. Additional reading which may help you decide:

1. JCO article "Shaping Your Career to Maximize Personal Satisfaction in the Practice of Oncology" (JCO 2006 24:24)
2. Career Success in Oncology published by ASCO in 2008

In choosing a career track, you may want to ask yourself the following:

- What you enjoying doing the most?
- Working directly with patients?
- Writing papers and grants?
- Teaching?
- Is income a factor?
- How will my choice impact my family/friends and lifestyle?
- Where do you want to live?

If you are interested in an academic career, it is important to decide on specific aspects of clinical work/research you are interested in. Ideally, the earlier the better, but it can sometimes take awhile to determine what your actual interests are. The following may help in decision-making:

1. Your rotations/electives—sometimes, it is very clear what interests you.
2. Speak to your program director—Dr. Shenkier is particularly skilled at this!
3. Speak to other medical oncologists—explore the pros and cons of various tumor sites (e.g. GI vs. GU vs. Gyne) as well as longitudinal interests (e.g. palliative care, geriatric oncology, clinical epidemiology, translational research, phase I clinical trials)
4. Speak to the department head at the institution(s) where you would be interested in working and explore potential niches which you could fill
5. While many academic centres require additional fellowship training, this can vary. If a fellowship is desired, you will need to find a supervisor

III. Fellowship supervisor

1. **Searching**—key features of a fellowship supervisor include expertise in the area of interest, and most importantly someone who will strongly support your career development as he or she will likely be your lifelong mentor. Your supervisor's institution also matters as the educational and research infrastructures can make a big difference in your training. The best way to identify a potential supervisor is to talk to your staff/program director to get a number of contacts.
2. **Contacting**—get in touch with your potential supervisor via e-mail, phone, or in-person at a conference.
3. **Proceeding**—ideally, consider an elective (summer prior is ideal given that grant applications are usually in the fall) to familiarize yourself with the supervisor/mentor and their institution. This would also be an ideal time to work on the fellowship funding application together.

IV. Funding Application

I have included a number of important funding sources in the following table for ease of comparison. The sources vary greatly, with different deadlines, funding amount, and most importantly, length of application.

Please note that the availability, deadlines, and other details for each funding source vary significantly from year to year, so it is VERY important that you verify the information yourself!

	National Cancer Institute of Canada (NCIC)	Canadian Association of Medical Oncologists (CAMO)	Royal College Clinician Investigator Program (CIP)	CIHR	ASCO Young Investigator program	Various Foundations, Societies, institutions or directly from your supervisor
Website	http://www.ncic.cancer.ca under personnel support and then post MD research fellowships	http://www.cos.ca/camo/default.asp under fellowships	For current residents at UBC, http://www.cipubc.ca For current residents at Toronto, http://www.utoronto.ca/cip/about.html	http://www.researchnet-recherchenet.ca/mr16/viewOpportunityDetails.do?prog=218&view=search&progType=CIHR-7&type=AND&resultCount=25	http://www.ascocancerfoundation.org/	Variable. For example, Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, IASLC fellowship for lung cancer,
Term	1-3 years	1 year, with potential to renew	2 year ONLY	1-5 years	3 years	Variable.
Deadline	September 15	November 15	November 1 March 1	February 1	November	Variable
Announcement	November	Around March	December April	June?	Before May?	Variable. If your supervisor has funding, you know right away!
Funding/year	Minimum of \$40000	\$65000+\$5000 for institution	\$60000	Up to \$60000 with \$5000 for institution	\$60,000+\$4000 for institution	Variable
Application process	Lots of work (NCIC application)	Moderate	Lots of work (CIHR-like application)	Lots of work (CIHR application)	Lots of work. Need IRB approval!	Variable. Almost no work if directly thru your supervisor

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Pros	Very well recognized funder Flexible duration of funding You find out funding very early for peace of mind	Very well recognized funder Short application (since 2007) Funding given to institution which means you get some benefits*	Well recognized funder Get a Royal College Certificate at the end You find out funding very early for peace of mind	Very well recognized funder Funding given to institution which means you get some benefits*	Very well recognized funder	If you get direct funding from supervisor, very limited work
Cons	You have to get your act together early to make the deadline Long application	You don't find out about it till late in year, and this may hinder the rest of your application to a certain extent	Concurrent enrollment in a Graduate program is desired (but they don't fund graduate program) Funds distributed through home institution (i.e. you are still a UBC resident...) Restricted to 2 year program (which is good and bad, depending on what you want)	Funding opportunities variable – you need to keep close eye to see if and when it will be launched. Long application	You need to have written up a protocol for your project in the institution as you need IRB approval, which could be a rate limiting step! This fellowship is best suited for people have are staying at home institution for further training. Very long application	Variable. It is always better to get your own funding.

Pearls

- Factors granting agencies look at include (ranked to a certain extent in order of importance): your mentor's CV, your mentor's institution/educational facilities, your proposed project, and your CV.

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- You will need a research project proposal for funding application. It is expected that your supervisor will guide you through this and suggest specific projects; of note, the proposed project is not always the actual project that you will participate in as most fellowship funding agencies offer some flexibility
- I suggest applying to at least 2 (e.g. CAMO and NCIC or CIP), and maybe up to 4 sources! The problem is that each application form is different - while you may be able to copy and paste some information, be prepared to spend 3-4 weeks on the first application, and at least 1-2 weeks for each extra application. For example, for CIHR/CIP applications, you need the (1) training module, (2) your CV module, (3) your supervisor's CV module; each can take a week or more to complete.
- Sometimes, individual institutions/mentors also have fellowship funding set up already. Having said that, it may be to your advantage to bring your own funding as this (1) allows more flexibility in your fellowship, and (2) can be added to your accomplishments/CV
- The good news is that most of the people who desire fellowships will obtain funding.
- For those who desire a graduate degree (which costs money), you may talk to your supervisor about funding. If you bring your own salary, they may be more likely to support your degree.
- In general, being ORGANIZED and GETTING THINGS DONE EARLY is the key to a success. Hopefully, this article provides some information for you to plan ahead.
- Other websites:
 - Dr. Chris Lee's website <http://www3.telus.net/cwlee/medonc/index.html>
 - Dr. Sunil Verma's site <http://www.oncologyeducation.ca/>

V. US Fellowship Application (this section is mostly based on Dr. Sophie Sun's advice)

After your funding application, there is still A LOT to do. Given that many of the applications take time to process, you probably do not want to wait till you have confirmed funding before moving onto the numerous tasks to ensure you can start your fellowship in time. Your institution usually assigns an academic coordinator who will work with you to guide you through all applications.

1. **Departmental and institutional application**—usually not too bad. Hospital Credentialing and Privileging can take 3-6 months depending on the hospital. Process usually starts before but can only be completed once you obtain the state medical license.
2. **VISA application**—for accredited US fellowships, it is usually done thru ECFMG (<https://www.ecfm.org/>). Get this in early (ideally January/February). You will need a number of supporting documents, including the Statement of Need from Health Canada (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/hhr-rhs/strateg/postgrad-postdoc/index-eng.php>). Check frequently with your institution liaison/fellowship advisor and ECFMG office to make sure things are on track as it is not uncommon for paperwork to go missing! US VISA options for Canadian citizens include
 - J1 – training visa for medical residents/fellows; relatively easy to obtain but is temporary work visa only and mandates that you cannot stay in the US to work; allows you to function as trainee and need supervisor to sign prescriptions, etc.
 - H1B – the preferred work visa with maximum flexibility; require USMLE I to III; takes up to 6-9 months to get, but University can pay for expedited processing (~\$1500 US).
 - NAFTA – for non-clinical research only as most universities require H1B or J1 in order to see patients; very easy to get – just go to the border with letter of employment and diplomas, etc and apply on the spot.
 - OA (Outstanding Alien) – work visa for those without the USMLEs; the university applies for you and often requires legal assistance as need to show that you are highly qualified for the position.

3. State Licensure

- Often the time-limiting step so apply early!! Takes 6-9 months on average and sometimes longer.
- Every state has its own process.
- The standard documents required usually include: birth certificate/passport, MD diploma, FRCPC, ABIM, USMLE transcripts (\$50), LMCC transcripts (must request certified transcript \$100 as other reports NOT accepted), documentation from provinces/states where you've had licenses (see individual websites for request forms and fees), medical school transcripts (some universities allow for multiple sealed copies to be sent directly to you and I found it handy to request a couple at once as you never know when you might need them), postgraduate training records/forms (usually a specific form required by the state), NPDB/HIPDB verification (this is an query that you complete on-line and

then notarize and send; the response to the self-query is sent back to you and you forward to licensing board; NB. there are 2 queries sent back and although they look alike, both must be forwarded).

- Some states require that you pass a jurisprudence exam (e.g. in Texas, you can only write this at prometric center in the US and it can take up to 3 months to obtain license after you pass the JP, which can delay things further).

4. Moving to the US

- **Crossing the border**—bringing dependents on H1B visa and they are Canadian, you do NOT require an interview with the US consulate prior to departure (if they are NOT Canadian, you need to set up an interview and this can take months, so book early, even before you get the visa); process relatively straightforward at the border – you need to show your visa documents, passport, letter from the University describing your appointment, marriage license (if applicable), diplomas; make sure there are no typographic errors on your I-94 (this is your entry card that stays in your passport) and that the visa type is specified (this happened to me whereby H1 rather than H1B was typed). If you were crossing the border by air, make sure you spare at least 2-3 hours to clear through customs (and that applies to connecting flights as well).
- **Money matters**—if you already have an account with a US bank, that is great. Otherwise, you have to wait till you get down to the US before you will be able to open an account with one of the US banks. I organized a US dollar account with a Canadian bank before moving, with a US dollar VISA card (which sure helped A LOT cutting out the exchange fee of 3%). However, it is still not as convenient as having an account with a US bank (e.g. cheques take longer to process). I would recommend that you bring A LOT OF CASH down there. If you plan to buy a car in the first month, bring enough plus \$5000-\$10000 to cover initial expenses! Alternatively, it may be a good idea to have traveler's cheques and/or blank money orders as some rental agencies do not take cash for deposits
- **Social Security Number**--getting this should be TOP PRIORITY as this is key to getting paid, setting up your telephone/internet, basically to do ANYTHING; you apply by visiting the local Social Security Office (bring your passport/visa and if possible, a letter from the University stating why you are in the US). For example, I arrived June 20, went to the social security office June 23, and got my card July 10. However, it could take 4-6 weeks...!
- **Vehicle Registration**—if you are driving across the border, this is done within 30 or so days of your arrival and you will need a Letter of compliance from your car manufacturer and inspection to register the car; if your car is going with a moving company, they will have the HS-7 form for you to complete and they will require the Letter of compliance as well
- **Driver's license**—you will require your social security number to apply; if you are staying for 1 year or less, you can usually just use Canadian license and do not need to go through further tests. However, if your stay is longer, you will probably need to get a State driver's license, which could mean taking the written and road test again!
- **Housing/accommodation**—some universities have campus housing for residents/junior faculty; alternatively on-line apartment locators can be helpful; promove.com is a service for Dallas and Atlanta that we used which was helpful.

- **Cable/telephone/utilities**—you need your social security number in order to apply for some of these (e.g. TV); short-term solution is to use a pay-as-you go cell phone which does not require SSN. I got my US cell phone during ASCO, and it worked wonders during the first few days! Remember you can research a lot of this stuff in Canada and set them up before your arrival. Ta da!

5. Insurance

- **Health insurance**—you may continue contribute to MSP (or this may be deducted from your pay slip if your funding is from CIP), and retain some Canadian benefit. I also have Canadian BlueCross and all the extended benefits which would cover me in the US. Unless the university gets some money from your grant, bringing your own salary may mean that you do not qualify for the employee benefits. If you are not covered, make sure you get some US health insurance.
- **Disability insurance**—this is almost as important as health insurance. If you don't already have it, or if it terminates after you finish your Canadian residency, it would be a good idea to make sure you secure this (perhaps before you leave for US).
- **Practice liability insurance**—usually covered by the institution. Check with your fellowship advisor.
- **Auto insurance**—if you are driving to your destination, keep your Canadian auto insurance plan at all cost, as long as they cover you in the US. Otherwise, the insurance would probably DOUBLE if you try to get it in the States as the companies “cannot” check your Canadian record, and many would not even cover you because they do not really recognize your Canadian driver's license!

General Tips

- Make copies of everything you send and track documents if possible as these often get lost!!!
- Start applications EARLY (i.e. December/January ideally).

VI. Frequently Asked Questions

USMLE

- Some States require you to have it in order to practice clinically, others don't. USMLE is not essential; however, it may to a certain extent affect where you do your fellowship.
- One of the key advantages for having the USMLE is that you can get an H1B VISA instead of J1, which would allow you more flexibility to work down there.
- Steps 1-3 required for H1B visa; need to take all 3 steps within 7 years.
- Step 3 is a 2-day computer-based exam; 1st day all MCQs, 2nd day combination of MCQs and clinical scenarios; the NBME has a study CD with ~600 sample questions and going through these should suffice for studying purposes.
- To apply for USMLE 3, you need a notarized application and fee; it can take 2-3 months to organize as waitlist for exam dates can be long and it takes 4-6 weeks to obtain results after passing.

ABIM

- Less important than USMLE (which is helpful for both VISA and State licensure). If you have a good chance of working in the States, writing ABIM may not be a bad idea.
- Passing ABIM would allow you from being Board eligible to becoming Board certified
- For people who will practice in Canada, ABIM exams are not required and are an added cost (\$1200 for internal medicine, \$1600 for med onc).

Moving

- Driving down is always a possibility; and you can bring your car and some stuff with you. Probably the cheapest option despite rising gas cost. Most people would consider it reasonably safe to drive down.
- Flying down is quicker, but you have to ship your stuff. If you like to send all your stuff including furniture, would need to hire a professional cross border company (vanlines). If you are selective in what you move, UPS may be an option (I moved about 10 big boxes with lots of stuff for \$900).