



## Recommendations & Considerations for Identifying Academic Detailers

### What is the role of an academic detailer?

Academic detailers, also referred to as clinical educators, provide individualized, one-on-one outreach and education to clinicians. Detailers recruit clinicians, deliver tailored and interactive evidence-based educational content, and help facilitate behavior change, with the goals of informing clinical practice and improving patient outcomes.

### Who should I hire as an academic detailer?

An effective academic detailer—that is, one who can help clinicians achieve better patient outcomes in a time-efficient manner—has a unique combination of skill, background, and work capacity.

### Skill set

Strong, persuasive communication and interpersonal skills are essential for the academic detailer. Detailers must be comfortable talking with clinicians across disciplines, persistent in their outreach, and adaptable to changing schedules. The successful detailer is also approachable, innovative, empathetic, and attentive.

#### Other essential skills include:

- Time management
- Social intuitiveness
- Public speaking
- Team communication
- Leading adult learning sessions
- Writing skills for documentation

### Professional experience and content expertise

Academic detailers are also highly knowledgeable in clinical content. Detailers most commonly work, or have previous training, in medicine, pharmacy, nursing, or public health—this means they may not only have exposure to (if not expertise with) relevant content but will likely also understand the complexities of systems change and the challenges of integrating evidence-based information into clinical care. Having both clinical experience as well as process expertise can be important for establishing clinician buy-in. While prior knowledge of specific content is not always essential, an eagerness and ability to learn new material through training is.

### Bandwidth

Finally, the successful academic detailer has sufficient bandwidth to perform his or her job. Bandwidth—which encompasses both available time and programmatic support—makes it possible to conduct unhurried but efficient visits, with each visit taking no more than 30-40 minutes. Additionally, detailers must also account for the time it takes to commute to clinician offices, schedule follow-up appointments and phone calls, update tracking sheets, and engage in intermittent training. A willingness to commit to the duration of an academic detailing intervention is also important—it can take time to establish rapport that leads to meaningful changes in clinical practices.

## Where can I find people to hire as detailers?

### Internally

- Public health staff, prescribers, pharmacists, nurses, etc. from within your organization
- If you are hiring for a:
  - Long-term detailing project, you may consider promoting full-time staff or adding hours for part-time staff
  - Short-term detailing project, you may consider current part-time staff or those with flexible projects and hours

### Externally

- Academia: public health, medical, nursing, or pharmacy schools
- Professional societies and associations
- Hospitals and health systems in your area
- Retired health professionals
- Coalitions, working groups, and boards of health

## What should I put in my job description and where should I post it?

### What

- List desired qualifications, including professional experience (as specific or general as needed for your project) and training
- Content topic of academic detailing intervention
- Hours required per week (including commuting and documentation time)
- The region or health system in which the detailer will be worker
- Driver's license if needed
- Training plan for detailers

### Where

- Use job boards and listservs
- Leverage pre-existing relationships with external groups or outreach initiatives
- Events or conferences
- Methods of internal communication

## Is providing protected time for detailing important?

Detailers with 0.4 FTE (full-time equivalent) or higher have a greater return on investment than those with less FTE<sup>1</sup>. Higher FTE employees are preferred due to their fewer competing priorities, providing them time to develop strong rapport with physicians, conduct thorough documentation and follow-up, and commute farther distances. As with all activities, more practice and experience lead to better performance.

## Are there any sample academic detailer job descriptions?

[Click here to view NaRCAD's example job description for an academic detailer \(adapted with permission from Alosa Health\)](#)

---

<sup>1</sup>Bounthavong M, Harvey MA, Kay CL, et al. Comparison of naloxone prescribing patterns due to educational outreach conducted by full-time and part-time academic detailers at the U.S. Veterans Health Administration. *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*. December 2019. doi:[10.1016/j.japh.2019.11.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.japh.2019.11.010)