Do I need to know a lot about medicine?

No. We would teach you what you need to know. We actually prefer people who have not had medical training, and we do not normally hire medical professionals, nor do we hire medical students or graduates who may themselves be required to take the examination in the future.

How much does the job pay?

Currently, starting pay for training is $16 per hour. Once you have successfully completed the full training and are scheduled as an “Approved for Live” SP, your supervisor will raise your pay to the current rate of $18.50 per hour.

I’m still interested. What do I do next?

The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG®) collaborates with the National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®), one of the parent organizations of the USMLE, in the development and administration of Step 2 CS. Step 2 CS is administered at regional Clinical Skills Evaluation Collaboration (CSEC) centers. Currently, there are test centers in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. As part of its collaboration with NBME, ECFMG hires and trains SPs for the exam. In addition to Step 2 CS, SPs may also be involved with pilot examinations involving new technology or new client exams. If you have read and understood the information in this brochure and are interested in applying for a position as a standardized patient, please visit the Careers page on the ECFMG website (http://ecfmgjobs.iapplicants.com/) and click “Search for a Job” to see open positions at any of our five locations. Click on the appropriate position title to reach the job description and click the “Apply Now” button to apply.

Depending on our needs, we will call you to attend an application session. We may then arrange an interview and physical assessment. You will also be required to sign an agreement of confidentiality and a release and consent form stating that you understand the nature of the work and agree to it. We will then schedule training sessions in consultation with you. You will be required to successfully complete an extensive training process and an SP Final Exam. All training and exam time is paid. Even if you do not employ you, we will keep your application on file for one year.

Thank you for your interest in our program.
Who are the examinees? Examinees are typically medical students and graduates who want to become residents or fellows in U.S. programs of graduate medical education or training. Doctors enter these advanced training programs after graduating from medical school. The examinees we test come from medical schools in the United States and other countries. As an SP, you may also encounter experienced, licensed U.S. doctors who conduct research for the exam. The examinees have varying levels of experience. Some may be inexperienced in performing physical examinations, and some may be very proficient.

What types of physical examinations are done? They are common examinations that you might have as a real patient in a doctor’s office. For example, examinees may listen to your heart and lungs with a stethoscope; press on your abdomen, looking for tenderness or swelling; look into your eyes, ears, and throat; take your blood pressure; assess your muscle strength; check your reflexes; check your pulses. Examinations that are NOT permitted are female breast examinations, rectal examinations, genital examinations (including “pelvic” examinations), and corneal reflex tests. Examinees are told that these examinations are not allowed. None of the examinations involve taking blood or other samples. SPs are never given any drugs.

Will I need to get undressed? Yes. SPs wear hospital gowns so that the examinees can perform physical examinations. They wear underwear underneath the gown. In some cases, the examinees may check pulses underneath the patient’s underwear, but the underwear does not need to be removed. Female SPs may be asked to loosen or move their bras for some examinations, such as listening to the heart, and they are expected to do so. They may even be asked to remove their bras completely, but SPs are trained to handle this sensitive situation. Since breast, genital, and rectal examinations are not permitted, there is no reason for total nudity.

Is it safe? Yes. There is no reason for anyone to experience anything that might be harmful. The examinations are very basic and do not cause any harm to SPs. At most, there may be some brief discomfort. All encounters are recorded and are observable via video monitors as they happen, in part for the safety of the SPs, and the examinees. They may also be observed for liability and insurance coverage for employees in the event of injury as a result of work.

Is this like being a research subject? No. Medical research subjects are given drugs or are placed on certain diets in order to study their reactions. We are testing the medical students or graduates (the examinees), not the SPs. We use SPs to simulate situations that are NOT permitted are female breast examinations, rectal examinations, genital examinations (including “pelvic” examinations), and corneal reflex tests. Examinees are told that these examinations are not allowed. None of the examinations involve taking blood or other samples. SPs are never given any drugs.

How do I know what to say when the examinee examines me? You would be trained to portray a particular patient with a very complete history. This includes the reason the patient is coming to see the doctor; the patient’s past medical history; the patient’s emotional state; and social details such as the patient’s job, family, and activities. Through our training process, you would learn to become that person, and to speak to the examinee just as that patient would. We would also show you how to more like the patient, and how to react to the physical examination. For example, if you were portraying someone with back pain, we would show you where it would hurt and what you could or could not do because of your bad back.

That sounds like acting. Do I have to be an actor? No. Some SPs are trained and experienced actors, but most are not. You can be a very good SP without ever having been on stage. There are some similarities to what actors do, but there are differences too. If you are an actor, you may find working as an SP to be good experience, but it will be much more difficult than working from a script or within dramatic improvisational outlines, and you may find it frustrating. This work has something to do with finding dramatic moments or playing to an audience. It has everything to do with disciplining yourself within the needs of the patient’s case and the exam. It is very repetitive, since exactly the same simulation must be done for every examinee.

Note that the cases must remain confidential. SPs sign an agreement that they will not disclose details about the cases they portray to others. They are not permitted to use the material in any public or private performance or to include case details (including the fictional patient’s name) on resumes. They are prohibited from sharing any information about cases through social media or other means.

Do I have to decide whether the examinee passes the test? No. Medical research subjects are given drugs or are placed on certain diets in order to study their reactions. We are testing the medical students or graduates (the examinees), not the SPs. We use SPs to simulate situations that are NOT permitted are female breast examinations, rectal examinations, genital examinations (including “pelvic” examinations), and corneal reflex tests. Examinees are told that these examinations are not allowed. None of the examinations involve taking blood or other samples. SPs are never given any drugs.

How often would I work? That is uncertain. The work is part-time, as needed. We schedule SPs based on examinee demand for the exam, the need for the case that each SP is trained for, and availability to work. Due to these variables, it is not possible for us to guarantee a minimum number of hours.