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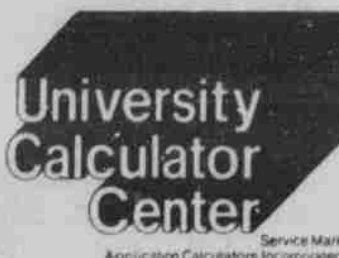
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Doctors receiving enlistment bonus

By Lisa Brown

A Lincoln doctor left the hurried world of private practice long enough last week to be sworn into the U.S. Air Force as a Major. He will begin active service soon.

Under a new armed services program, physicians who enlist in the service can receive a bonus up to \$13,500 after fulfilling initial obligations.

Colonel Lindy Gunderson, commander of the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (AFROTC) at UNL, acted as coordinator between the doctor and the USAF medical recruiting office in Kansas City, Mo.

The doctor requested that there be no publicity and would not allow his name to be used, Gunderson said.

The Variable Incentive Pay (VIP) program was started last fall in an effort to retain physicians in the military, Gunderson said. The military saves the cost of training doctors, and places experienced people directly into medical positions.

Doctors enlisting in the Air Force would usually rank captain. An exception was made in the Lincoln doctor's case because of his experience.

Other area doctors

Several other doctors from the Lincoln-Omaha area have requested applications for the program, said Master Chief Petty Officer Al Mundt, Naval Program representative in Omaha.

Because of an extreme shortage of doctors in the armed services, all branches of the military are offering special scholarships to students in any stage of medical training, as well as the cash bonuses to enlisting practicing physicians.

Under the VIP system a captain who has completed internship and residency and contracts to serve four years could receive a total annual salary of almost \$30,000, said Col. Charles C. Beale, chief of the Air Force medical personnel recruiting division at Kansas City, Mo.

The VIP bonus decreases for shorter agreements.

Pay increases

As a physician's longevity and rank increase, Beale said, his pay increases so that a Lt. Col. with 20 years service contracting for four years active duty could expect to receive more than \$37,000 annually.

To receive a bonus, a physician must enter or be on active duty with a rank of captain through colonel and must not have any initial disqualifying active duty obligations such as might be incurred through scholarship or ROTC programs.

A physician must agree to serve one, two, three or four years on active duty after satisfying all eligibility requirements. They also must be entering a "critical speciality."

"All medical officer specialties will be designated as critical for the purpose of awarding the VIP during fiscal year 1975," Beale said.

"We currently need 613 physicians, an increase over our previous goal of 544," he said.

More enlisting

Generally, more medically trained personnel are enlisting in the Air Force across the nation, he said.

A phone survey of several Army, Navy, and Air Force recruiters in Nebraska showed that although the number of medically trained people joining the service has increased there seems to be only one case where a doctor joined under the VIP program.

Dr. Lloyd Jones, an intern at Bryan Memorial Hospital, said he seriously considered the VIP program but decided not to enlist because it would take too many years from his private practice.

If he doesn't obtain a residency in Omaha as he plans, however, he will probably enlist under the program, he said.

Enlistment benefits

Enlistment in the program offers benefits such as a chance to travel, an opportunity to learn how to fly and because of military controls, fewer worries about malpractice suits. The tremendous boost in pay now offered is also an important benefit, he said.

Doctors in the service are very opinionated about their work—some like it and others hate it, Jones said. He said some dislike it because they are not in "high-powered academic medicine" or because a superior officer is holding them back.

Nationally more than 1,700 responses have been received from doctors interested in the program, as a result of Air Force advertisements.

The military recruits people in medically related fields though other programs with special opportunities. Sgt. Harry Rexroad, Air Force recruiter for the Hastings-Grand Island area, said the number of nurses interested in the service has doubled in the last year. Rexroad attributed the increase to the national job situation.



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