

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Bonnie Koo, MD

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

Welcome to the *Wealthy Mom MD Podcast*, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it, and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Hey everyone, welcome back to another episode. So it is full-on fall here. It's actually the end of October here, and so we all know that the days are just getting shorter and shorter and shorter. I feel like I podcasted about this but maybe it was on my social media, but last winter I actually bought these glasses called Luminette. L-U-M-I-N-E-T-T-E, something like that.

I have no conflict of interest with them, but the reason why I bought these glasses is because I definitely get a little more depressed during the winter, and I know many of you do as well. And so most of you have probably heard of a traditional light box that you can buy that has like, they're like measured in something called Lux, L-U-X, like 10,000 Lux or whatever it is. And it's a measurement of light to simulate the sunlight during the winter when it's dark in the morning.

Anyway, I got offered that, but the reason why I bring this all up is that I have discovered a podcast, it's not new but new to me, called The Huberman Lab, H-U-B-E-R-M-A-N, I am currently obsessed with this podcast. Dr. Huberman is a neuroscientist at Stanford and he just has these podcasts that go really deep into the science, the neuroscience of lots of many topics.

And the first several are about how our sleep cycle works and how light is so important. And he just nerds out and I love it. So if you're a physician or just someone who loves to get nerdy like that, you will love it. He has pretty long episodes because they are so full of information. In fact, some of them I've had to listen to twice, it was that much information.

But anyway, the reason why I'm bringing this all up is that he talks about how getting that morning light and specific type of light in a specific amount,

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

again, that's where the Lux thing comes in, in terms of regulating your sleep and mood, et cetera. Now, you all know this, but it just made me realize that I don't have to wait until like December, I think that's kind of what I was thinking. Like, oh, I have to wait till it's actual winter before I start using these glasses.

But after I listened to that episode I started wearing them in the morning because I wake up between 6:00 and 6:30am on the East Coast and it's dark. The sun doesn't rise until, I don't know, 7:15 or so. And, of course, in his podcast he says the easiest way to do this is to actually get outside during sunrise. And that's just not feasible for most people. It's not really feasible for me, especially when it gets cold outside. The last thing I want to do is go outside.

So I started wearing these glasses. I know that was kind of a long-winded, totally random introduction. But when I started telling people about the glasses that I have, a lot of my friends and even people on social media were really interested. So I just wanted to bring that up again.

Another thing that I've been using these glasses for is for jet lag because, again, one of the ways to beat jet lag – And actually, in that podcast I just mentioned he has a whole podcast on jet lag and shift workers and how to deal with that. So I've actually been using that when I travel time zones. I used it when I went to Paris and I definitely felt like it was helpful. Okay, totally unrelated to today's episode.

So today I'm actually going to do a replay of episode number four. In fact, I wasn't planning on doing that, I just wanted to record a podcast about why it's so important to have multiple streams of income. At this point we're almost at 200 episodes, which is kind of crazy to me. And I already talked about this very topic in episode four, but that was a long time ago. And if you are a recent listener, it's unlikely that you've gone through every one of my episodes.

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

And so the only thing I really want to add to this episode is how I love to describe investing now. It's taking today's cash flow for tomorrow's cash flow. I want to talk about the concept that I teach my clients inside my paid program, the wealth table concept, and how important it is to have multiple streams of income.

Now, when people are asking me, well, how long will it take? Different types of streams take different amounts of time and effort. And I really want all of you listening to consider that this is a must, not a nice to have, okay? And so I'm going to be going over the mindset around this, why you should definitely do this. And I would love for you to get started before the end of the year. And what I mean by that is to decide what stream you're going to work on. And what if you could take three action steps before the end of the year?

I give some examples on the podcast and I have several podcasts talking about sort of the different types of streams that are available to you. We have quite a few podcast episodes on real estate with special guests, on passive and active, and then we also have a few episodes on entrepreneurship. So this is a great sort of introduction and orientation to the concept, and then you can move on to some of the other podcasts that I have.

Speaking of which, I'm actually in the middle of creating a podcast guide, because I know many of you are new to the podcast. And like I said, there's almost 200 episodes, so kind of a lot to wade through. And so my goal with this guide is to kind of give you a framework of how to approach the podcast and sort of give you specific podcasts to listen to, to kind of get you oriented and so that you can start taking some action.

Okay, so here is the episode, Think Beyond Your Clinical Income.

I am super excited about today's topic because it took me a long time to even consider this as something I could do. My hope is that it will inspire you to get started. What am I even talking about? I'm talking about thinking

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

beyond your clinical income. In other words, creating multiple streams of income. I have heard this concept so many times, but it wasn't until recently that I truly understood why, or how, or even what it really meant.

Now that I'm actually saying this out loud, I feel a little stupid, because who doesn't want multiple streams of income, right? One thing I've learned as a physician is that most physicians, we often have a fixed mindset. We kind of are somewhat narrow-minded in terms of what we think is possible.

When we talk about working as a physician, at least for me, when I was in residency I thought my only choices were to find a job in academics or find a job in private practice. And yeah, I knew there were things in between. But basically, I just assumed I would do patient care and that's all I would do pretty much 100% of the time. It's so interesting to look back at that time.

I'm talking about our jobs, obviously. I like to joke that job stands for just over broke, because if you think about it – Or let me ask you, if your job suddenly dried up, and up until recently physician jobs were pretty much secure, would you be okay? Is your physician job your only source of income? Or is it the main source of income in your family? Because assuming you're a two parent household or two partners in a household, you both might be working, but maybe you're the breadwinner as a physician.

Up until recently physicians really enjoyed amazing job security, and multiple things have changed slowly over time. For example, most physicians, outpatient like me for example, we often opened up our own shop immediately after residency.

But in the past 10, 20 years or so that's changed. We've come to have more of an employee mindset and an employee model, whereas we just want to find a job. We're not really interested in starting our own business. I really wonder why that started changing. Now, obviously, if you are in a

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

certain surgical field, you often do work for a hospital, but there are several private surgery groups that just contract with the hospital.

Back to the original question, how secure really is your job as a physician? And with the recent pandemic we've found out that our jobs really aren't as secure as we think. I like to imagine our income as a table, think of a table, let's say a round table just for illustration purposes. And think of the table having traditionally four legs, but you can have as many legs as you want. And each leg represents a stream of income.

If you're a typical physician working in a typical patient care job, you have maybe one leg for your physician income anyway. And I'll talk about how most of us have a second leg for retirement and things like that, but let's just talk about our physician income. Most of us only have one way we make money as a physician. And there's nothing wrong with that, by the way. I just want to present that there's multiple ways to go about this.

If you think about it, there's so many ways to make money as a physician. I talked about private practice, I talked about academics. Now I'm a dermatologist, so my view might be a little skewed. But I also could have done research and got paid grants, maybe apply for the NIH. I know many physicians who also work in research and they also still see patients as well, but they're making money in a few different ways.

A lot of doctors also do consulting on the side, whether it's for pharmaceutical companies, whether it's for startups, things like that. You can also be on advisory boards because your knowledge as a practicing physician is super valuable to many companies. And I've done a few consulting gigs here and there for companies to talk about medications.

We all know that some people do some telemedicine on the side. You've seen people doing surveys. Don't forget that things like moonlighting and locums, I would consider that a separate stream of income if you have another stream of working as a regular physician. You might have your regular four or five day a week full-time job, but maybe occasionally you

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

add on some extra shifts with moonlighting or maybe you do locums. I know people doing that for sure. I would consider that separate streams of income, okay?

Anyway, you get the point. There are so many ways to make money as a physician. There are so many options besides good old patient care. In fact, I think in this day and age it'd be remiss to not think about other ways to bring money using your physician brain.

Okay, so I think I made that point clear, you can have multiple legs just using your "physician brain." Now, most of us have at least one other leg to stand on, the stock market. I hope all of us have retirement accounts. With a lot of employers, even during residency, you get an automatic 403B or 401K. And oftentimes, they'll automatically sign you up and put a small percentage for you.

Obviously, you can go in and change that to zero if you want. I actually did that. I don't recommend doing that, by the way. We do have a second leg, and that's the stock market. And that's usually via retirement accounts, so 401K's, Roth IRAs, IRAs, even brokerage accounts. We all know that it takes a long time for that leg to firm up. Meaning that if I lost my job today, I do have a stock market leg, but it's not going to really pay me all that much.

At least for me, and I think for many people, we think of our stock market accounts as something that's going to pay us in "retirement," like after age 50, or 60, or 70. So we're not really worried about it providing income for us right now, but we're actively putting money into it and letting compound interest do its thing.

But as you know, or maybe you don't know, compound interest, it just takes a long time because you need two things for compound interest to work. You need time and you need an interest rate. And the third thing is you need your contribution or your principal.

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

And so, unfortunately, you can't really speed up the time. You can play around with the interest rate or rate of return a little bit by your asset allocation. But at the end of the day, it generally takes years, if not decades for this leg to become firm and provide you with a steady stream of income.

I think you're starting to see the point of this round table with legs. You want to have as many legs as possible. At least four, don't you think? If not more. And you can add on as many as you want. And it seems like it would be a lot of work, but I just showed you earlier that even with just your "physician brain," you can have multiple legs in the sort of physician brain category.

Let me give an example of mine. I can make money seeing patients as a dermatologist, and I've certainly done that. I also do some teledermatology, that's a little stream of income as well. I don't do surveys, but I certainly could. I have done consulting in the past. I've done some advisory board stuff in the past.

Oh, and I forgot to mention that some doctors also do casework for lawyers. You can testify on behalf of a physician. You can also just review cases. So there's just so many ways you can use your physician brain to make money.

This concept of multiple streams of income, it's simple and it totally makes sense, right? But how come so many of us don't do it? My take is most of us, we've been taught our whole lives that money wise, all we had to do is to study hard and get a good job, especially if you're a physician, right? We were told, you've got to study hard to get into a good college. Get good grades so you can get into medical school and so forth. You always had to work hard and study hard to eventually become a physician.

I find it really strange that there's this concept in our society that you want to do, AKA your job, has to be tied to one primary source of income. And so when you ask little kids what they want to do when they grow up, the real question, I think, is to ask how much money do you want to make? And that

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

might seem bold, and maybe you're feeling like, oh, did she even say that? But that's because a lot of us just have weird, and I would say negative, money beliefs because of the way we were brought up.

But that's really the question we're asking. We are asking, what do you want to do? Do you want to be an architect? Do you want to be a physician? Do you want to be a fireman? But all of these things, they're tied to a certain range of income. I know there's a range, especially among physicians, right? Some of us barely make six figures and some of us make over a million dollars. So there's a range, but there is pretty much an agreed upon range for each career choice.

I actually think this is where we get into trouble because why does your life passion, what you want to do in your life, your gifts you want to share with the world, why does that have to be directly tied to your ability to make money? I actually think we could separate that. I'm going on a bit of a tangent right now.

Have you noticed that no one has really questioned that sort of societal teaching that your job has to be tied, one stream of income, or that your life's passion, your life's work has to bring in the majority of your income. And I'll be honest, when I first heard about the concept of multiple streams of income, I just assumed it wasn't for me. That's something only rich people do.

And maybe you're thinking the same thing. Or maybe you assumed your job is secure. I think it's safe to say that we don't know what's going to happen, short-term or long-term, but what's certain is that we and life is always changing. And that's just the way it is. Even though today I might think I'd like to work "forever," 20 years, 30 years as a physician full-time, and that I like working hard right now, it doesn't mean I'm going to think the same things in five years, 10 years, or even just next year.

We're always changing. And things happen, like having children or having a life event like someone close to you pass away. Suddenly our priorities

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

change rapidly. What am I doing, or I should say what is my family doing right now for sources of income? At the time of this recording it's actually during the pandemic, and so I'm not seeing patients right now.

I am doing some teledermatology, so I'm still using my physician brain to bring in some money. I'm not doing surveys. I haven't really looked into anything else in terms of my physician brain. I obviously have Wealthy Mom MD, and it is a profitable business. But even within this one business, or this one umbrella of Wealthy Mom MD, the business makes money through multiple streams, literally.

One stream is I coach physicians one on one. And so that's one stream of income. I also have an online course, Money For Women Physicians, that also brings in money as well. I make money through affiliate marketing.

For those of you who don't know what that is, that means that if you buy something through me by clicking on a link, at no extra cost to you, I may get a percentage or a flat fee when you buy something through Amazon, for example. That's probably what a lot of us use. The commissions for Amazon are pretty low, however, unless you have high volume.

If you buy, for example, I've partnered up with other physician entrepreneurs who sell courses that I think are useful for my readers that have to do with money, I will get a commission from that as well. So that's my affiliate income stream. I also have a few sponsors. I used to have a lot more, but I've sort of whittled that down to just a few core sponsors. So that's another stream of income.

I am planning some live events, including a retreat and a conference. So that will be, once again, another stream of income. I do some speaking. I wouldn't say it's a huge source of income, but I often do get paid for that.

So as you can see, even though it's one business, Wealthy Mom MD, there are multiple ways that the business makes money. And I'm always thinking, how else can I create income that's not going to be necessarily related to

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

affiliate income, or my course income, et cetera? I'm always looking for ways that I can create streams of income that are unrelated or just separate so that I don't have to rely on any one stream.

As of this recording, I'm actually working on a skincare line. So stay tuned for that.

Okay, so I hope we're all in agreement that having multiple streams of income is key. And yes, we should all be interested in doing this, right? I'm guessing you probably have a lot of questions. Questions like, well, how do I get started? How much time will it take, because I don't have a lot of time? Is it worth it? And I don't have any money to get started. These are totally valid questions. But before I even go into them, I think it's really important to sort of take a step back and think about why.

Why are you even interested in having multiple streams of income? Now, I realize the surface answer is, well, to have more money or to have more security. What does that security do for you? What mouths are you trying to feed? I think for many of us, it's pretty simple. We just want freedom, we want peace of mind, we want security. We want to feel like we can always take care of our families, things like that. And some of us have bigger goals. And that's super awesome.

I think if you kind of go to that core why, you know, what's the point of all this, because otherwise it's really easy to get lost in the details, it's really easy to stop and get stuck because let's just be honest, I wish there was a very easy way to make money super fast, but that's not the case. If that was true, we'd all have multiple streams of income and you wouldn't need this podcast.

But the truth of the matter is, things that are worth doing usually take some effort, there are going to be obstacles in the road. And so this is also why I decided to become a coach, because I started to see that it was critical to be able to handle these mental roadblocks because pretty much 99.99% of

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

the time, they're roadblocks that only exist in your head. They're actually not real, based in reality.

But here's the good news, you are a physician. What does that mean? That means I know you can do hard things. You had to in order to become one. There are so many obstacles on our path to becoming physicians. And I want to remind you, when you got into medical school, when you got that acceptance letter, didn't you truly believe that you would become a physician? You didn't quite understand or you didn't quite know the how.

Yes, I know that you knew medical school is four years. Residency is three to seven years or more depending on the specialty. I knew you understood the sort of basic pieces and there would be all these tests involved. You didn't know exactly what you were going to learn in terms of the day to day stuff. You didn't realize exactly how it was all going to fall together, because you couldn't have known that, right? You didn't know what your rotations would be like.

Sure, you may have heard from people who have gone through it before, but every school is different, every experience is different. And so that's kind of the analogy that I like to give. You just have to commit that you're going to create multiple streams of income. You might not know the how, and that's okay. And in fact, I'll say it's actually not as important as you think it is. But it's so funny, in some ways, our brains can't see that it's possible unless we know all the exact steps to get there.

But I want to remind you that you did not know all the exact steps to become a physician, yet you believed you would become one after you go into medical school. That is having that leap of faith that you know you're going to get there without having to know all the itty bitty details.

Hey there, thanks so much for tuning in. If you loved what you heard, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode. And if you're listening to this on Apple Podcasts, I'd love for you to leave a review. Reviews tell Apple that this podcast is, well, awesome. And it will help women find this

185: How to Create Multiple Streams of Income as a Physician

podcast so that they too can live a wealthy life. And finally, you can learn more about me and what I do at wealthymommd.com. See you next week.