Leveraging and creating a network of people to reach out to in healthcare is principally important to accomplishing your goals. When you have a strong network you can reach out and ask questions about working in a particular part of the country, connect on various health settings, or gain insights on countless topics. The knowledge you learn from others can help you shape the decisions you make across a variety of decisions.

One tip for success is pursuing events and continuing education. At these events, ideally in-person, you will meet many individuals with similar or varied interests that have valuable connections and information. Before I attend an event I always try to obtain a list of people going. I look up their names on LinkedIn and try to prioritize who I want to meet and write down a question to ask them. Since I remember faces easier than names, I screenshot their profile image and put it in a document with the questions I have for them before the event. It is easy to look at the document on your phone during the event to see if you can identify the people you have prioritized to meet. Having thought of questions ahead of time has allowed me to make deeper and faster connections while gaining insights on topics important to me. Many people have been impressed that I was prepared questions for them about their region, job, or health system and have expressed it is a great practice as well as flattering to the individual.

Business cards are an easy way to remember who you networked with at an event and allow you to write down where you met the person and a quick reminder of your conversation. I encourage each individual networking to write on the cards they receive. Do not just keep the card but also add them on LinkedIn after the event. Emails and phone numbers change and LinkedIn is a great way to keep your connections on your radar, follow their career journey, and see their posts. A common issue I encounter is the inability to put notes on a LinkedIn profile about how you met the person like you can with a business card. The habit I have started for myself is to add a note when sending the connection invite or putting in a message to the person some reference to where we met and what we talked about. Doing this makes it easy to go back and see by clicking messages on the person’s account the details of your initial meeting.

The feature on LinkedIn that has been most helpful to me is the ability to locate 2nd degree of separation connections. I go to a person’s profile that I have in my network. Note: This person will need to have allowed their connections to see their other connections. When on their account I click on their connections. At the top of the page of their connections you can see an All Filters button. After clicking All Filters, I select the 2nd box. You can scroll down and see where you can enter information you are seeking in sections labled: area of the country, company, industry, title, or various other pieces of information that you maybe interested in. This feature will search their connections for the data you opted to seach for. The people that populate will, for example, work at the company you typed in/selected. Using this data, I have then asked my connection to introduce me to their connection that populated from this search. This has helped me identify people with jobs that have specific words in their title that I wish to be connected with.

Reaching out to new connections can be difficult when they do not reply to you. One tip is to ask them for their advice or an opinion. People are much more likely to respond in my experience when you phrase your request in a way that doesn’t seem you are seeking a favor or job. I tend to ask “would you be willing to talk for 15-minutes to give me an opinion or advice on ….” Many connections will be willing to spare 10-15 minutes and enjoy giving opinions.

Networking can help you achieve your goals and expand your knowledge and influence. Go to in person events when possible, try to find out who will be attending, as you do some reaserch on the attendees preare some questions for who you would like to meet. When at events, collect business cards and follow up with a LinkedIn invite containing details on where you met and briefly what you enjoyed talking about. Lastly, leverage the LinkedIn search features on the main page and within your connections list to have a higher chance of finding people you wish to target and ask them for their opinon/advice.