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INTERVIEWING FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

WHY DO MEDICAL SCHOOLS INTERVIEW?

- ❖ Evaluate your personality, professionalism, and maturity.
 - ❖ Be nice to everyone, from the moment you arrive until you leave: “Muddy Boots” blunder
- ❖ Want to hear in your words about your motivation to pursue medicine:
 - ❖ They will want to learn not just why you want to become a doctor, but *how* you have tested and confirmed your vocation to become a clinician
- ❖ Have courage to speak up and advocate for patients who may have no one else to speak for them.
 - ❖ “OK to be shy, but no OK to be reticent.” (*U Michigan*)
- ❖ Learn if you have realistic expectation of life as a physician.

ADVICE

Stanford Dean of Admissions' instructions to interviewers:

“Does your interaction with the candidate conform to the expectations you derived from reading the application? If not; what are the discrepancies? What is missing? Do you detect any characteristics that cause you to question the candidate’s suitability for a career in medicine or the ability to think logically and critically?”

Peers:

“The interview was the least stressful and most enjoyable part of the application experience.”

PREPARATION: TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

- ❖ Try Manchester NH, and Providence RI airports
- ❖ See studentdr.net “Interview Feedback” > Tour and Travel at <http://studentdoctor.net/schools/> for information about airport/s closest to the school, and other useful travel info

- ❖ Find out about student hosts

- ❖ Schedule as soon as receiving an invitation
 - ❖ Rolling vs. Non-Rolling admissions schools
 - ❖ Going abroad during interview season?

- ❖ On Financial Aid/HFAI? The Financial Aid Office *may* be able to help with some costs

PREPARATION: WHAT TO WEAR

- ❖ Aim for professional and neat look (see “OCS Interviewing,” (<http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/materials/interviewing.pdf>) Dress code in the medical profession is most similar to “business casual”)
- ❖ If you feel uncomfortable in your clothes, this can come across: Your interviewer will try to picture you inspiring confidence in your future patients
- ❖ You will be evaluated on your judgment when it comes to dress and personal style
- ❖ Expressing individuality is fine, but be somewhat conservative with regard to facial piercings, tongue studs, etc.: These can be distracting, so best to remove for interview day
- ❖ Silence your phone
- ❖ Bring breath mints (advice from an alum)

PREPARATION: **SPECIFIC SCHOOL INFO**

- ❖ Come prepared to tell them more about why their med school offers the right fit for you:
 - ❖ Build on what you wrote about the specific medical school in your secondaries
 - ❖ Be prepared to show that you are familiar with the school's style of teaching and testing (Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and small group instruction vs. lecture; traditional exams vs. P/F flexible quizzes, "Yale System," etc.)
 - ❖ Review Harvard Alumni Evaluations and AMSA Medical School Surveys at <http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/careers/medicine.htm>
 - ❖ Review Studentdoctor.net "Interview Feedback" at <http://studentdoctor.net/schools/>

PREPARATION: SPECIFIC SCHOOL INFO

- ❖ Resources on the OCS website:
 - ❖ Additional materials and handouts from this workshop are available at:
<http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/careers/medicine/applicationprocess/interview.htm>
 - ❖ Alumni Evals: [Advice from Harvard alumni currently in med school](#) (pdf) and [archives of alumni responses from '05-'10](#).
- ❖ You do not have to know everything

PREPARATION: PREPARING YOURSELF

- ❖ Review your Personal Statement and application (and bring a copy with you)
- ❖ If very anxious, learn and practice breathing.
- ❖ Prepare 3-4 things to present if asked general questions

PREPARATION: PREPARING YOURSELF

- ❖ Mock interviews are conducted by your House (contact your premed tutors)
- ❖ See the interviewing resources available on the OCS website at http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/jobs_interviewing.htm
- ❖ Including practice online with [InterviewStream](#), available from your [Crimson Careers](#) homepage

INTERVIEW DAY: TIPS

1. Be yourself
2. Be nice to everyone
3. Be prompt
4. Be confident
5. Be prepared but do not over rehearse. Be flexible.

INTERVIEW DAY: TIPS

6. During the interview: Non-content areas

- Smile. Shake hands. Eye contact.
- Actively engage. Be positive and upbeat.
- Posture and body language
- Expect the unexpected
- Give direct, thorough answers. Do not ramble.
- Take your student interviewer seriously
- Do not over analyze or second guess the questions.

Both parties want positive outcome: Your interviewer is not trying to trap you

INTERVIEW DAY: TIPS

7. Anticipate what might concern interviewer (e.g., poor grades, disciplinary action). Have explanation ready that is not excuse or rationalization.
8. What positive qualities and achievements that you want people to be aware of?
9. Not expected to resolve difficult ethical, moral, or political issues (e.g., national health reform), but should be able to demonstrate familiarity with current issues in medicine.
10. At the end: Be prepared for “anything else you want me to know?”

INTERVIEW FORMAT

- ❖ Traditional (45-60 min)
- ❖ Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)
 - ❖ Now used by 21 U.S. schools, incl. UMass, Stanford, Duke, Univ. of Arizona, UC Davis, UCLA, UCLA, UCLA PRIME, Virginia Tech Carilion, U. of AZ, Univ. of Cincinnati, SUNY Upstate, and by 12 out of 17 Canadian schools
- ❖ Group
 - ❖ Washington (3 on 1), Emory (group + individual interview), Northwestern (individual + panel)
 - ❖ Look at each person who asked questions. Look at fellow students when answer.
- ❖ Skype/Virtual (Duke – now in the MMI format)

INTERVIEW FORMAT

- ❖ How can I learn more about each school's interview format?
 - ❖ School websites
 - ❖ Subscribe to the AAMC's online resource Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) (cost \$22), where detailed information about school interview format can be found
<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/>
 - ❖ [Information About Requirements, Admissions, and Financial Aid Policies for 2014 Medical School Matriculation Prepared by Harvard College HPA \(XLS\) \(column O\)](#)
 - ❖ See Studentdoctor.net "Interview Feedback" > select school > select "Questions" > see responses to "What was the style of the interview?"
(<http://studentdoctor.net/schools/>)

INTERVIEW FORMAT

❖ Open vs. Closed file

- ❖ Open file: the interviewer may have read only your PS, or your whole application
- ❖ Your interviewer may read your file in front of you: Try not to be rattled by this if it happens to you.
- ❖ Closed file: Your interviewer has not seen your application.

❖ Interviewer

- ❖ Faculty member, MD student at the school, or alum of the school: See school websites and studentdr.net for more information about who participates in the interview process

INTERVIEW FORMAT

- ❖ Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)
 - ❖ 6-10 stations, 2 minutes to read, 6-8 minutes to answer/execute (120 min.)
 - ❖ Scenario based questions: tend to be situational, ethical, and problem solving oriented. Also spatial and collaborative problem solving. Exact knowledge of question not required.
 - ❖ Review bioethics resources at <http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/careers/medicine/applicationprocess/interview.htm> > [Resources for bioethics and health news](#)

INTERVIEW FORMAT

❖ Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- ❖ Many MMI schools include a longer, traditional, interview question as one station; other schools combine MMI with traditional interview
- ❖ Some stations use actors, some involve partner work with another interviewee
- ❖ Some schools add a rest station: don't rehash previous question. Clear your mind and get ready for the next.

INTERVIEW FORMAT

❖ Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- ❖ Scoring based on how you answer the question: do you consider different perspectives and possible answers? How do you react emotionally to the interviewers follow up questions. How do you respond if disagreed with.
- ❖ Found predictive of interpersonal, social, and cultural competencies; medical school curricula as well as clinical practice now emphasize team-based learning and practice.
- ❖ See school websites and studentdr.net “Interview Feedback” for up-to-date information about schools adopting the MMI and their specific MMI formats

THE MD-PHD INTERVIEW

- ❖ Make an appointment with Sirinya or Oona to review tips and best approaches
- ❖ Meet with and set up a mock interview with an MD-PhD student on the Resident or Non-Resident Premed staff at your House
- ❖ Prepare an “Elevator Speech” of 90-second duration to describe your research extemporaneously

DO THE EXERCISE!

- ❖ Pair up and pull a question from the basket
- ❖ Let each partner answer his/her question, and ask the partner his/her question
- ❖ After 5 to 7 minutes, we will return to a group debrief

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Traditional

- ❖ Why should we accept you?
- ❖ Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- ❖ Why do you want to be a doctor?
- ❖ How have you tested your commitment and decision to go into medicine?
- ❖ Do you have any concerns about going into medicine?
- ❖ What experiences have most motivated you to pursue medicine?
- ❖ What clinical experiences have you had?
- ❖ Why medicine?
- ❖ What got you interested initially in medicine?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Creative

- ❖ If you could be one kind of food, what would you be?
- ❖ What section of the newspaper do you read first?
- ❖ If your house were burning, what three objects would you save?
- ❖ If you could be one superhero, who would you be?
- ❖ If you were on a desert island, what would be the one book you'd take with you?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Behavioral

- ❖ Tell me about a time when you had to compromise.
- ❖ Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. What did you do and how did you correct it?
- ❖ What was the most stressful situation you ever faced and how did you handle it?
- ❖ Tell me about a time when you collaborated on a successful project.
- ❖ Tell me about a time when you got into a conflict with someone else. How was it resolved?
- ❖ How do you handle stress?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Vague

- ❖ What are the 3 strongest qualities about you?
- ❖ Tell me about yourself.
- ❖ What is the most important event in your life?
- ❖ What is the one thing you want me to convey to the admission committee?
- ❖ Tell me about your upbringing.
- ❖ What do you do for fun?
- ❖ How would a good friend describe you as a person?
- ❖ Who are you?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Background knowledge

- ❖ What is the one thing you would change about the healthcare system in America?
- ❖ What is the biggest challenge that is facing the medical field today?
- ❖ What is your opinion about the high cost of healthcare?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Ethical

- ❖ Are there any situations in which you think it is okay to end a terminally ill patient's life?
- ❖ What would you do if a 15-year-old came into your clinic and wanted an abortion?
- ❖ Do you think that animal testing is justified for the sake of medical research?
- ❖ How would you react if a colleague wanted you to keep a medical error they made a secret from a patient?

INTERVIEW EXERCISE: DEBRIEF

Sensitive

- ❖ Is this your first choice school? *[Assume that it is not and answer.]*
- ❖ How do you know you will not want to drop out of med school in a couple years?
- ❖ What is your worst quality?
- ❖ What is your biggest weakness?
- ❖ If you couldn't be a physician, what career would you choose?
- ❖ How will you juggle a medical career with a family life?
- ❖ Do you plan to have children in the future?
- ❖ How do you plan to pay for medical school?
- ❖ If you are religious, how do you think this will affect your decision making as a physician?

POST-INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

- ❖ Send a note to your student host.
- ❖ Send a hand written note to interviewers or to everyone on a panel.
- ❖ Thank them for their time
- ❖ Be enthusiastic about the school.
- ❖ Proofread – not send to Yale if was UMich
- ❖ Don't try to sneak in personal statement
- ❖ Will be read by interviewer before presenting to committee; will strengthen recollection of you.
- ❖ May or may not become part of your file
- ❖ Send it ASAP