Preparing for a Successful Medical School Interview

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Overview

1. Research and preparation
2. Preparing your interview agenda
3. Types of interview questions
4. Possible topics of discussion
5. Presenting yourself professionally
6. Practice, Practice, Practice!
3 Key Areas of Research

1. Yourself
2. The School/Program
3. The Career Field
Research and Preparation: Yourself

- How do you know you want to be a doctor?
- How do you know you are going to succeed?
- What strengths, motivations, characteristics, values, etc. do you posses that will lead to your success?

Review your application material carefully.
Preparation and Research: The School

Get to know the school to target your presentation:

– Mission Statement
– Current Research
– Program Design
– Teaching Approach
– Current Issues

Where would you find this information?
What are some advantages of being a doctor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor-Patient Relationship</td>
<td>Unique ability to help people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>High demand</td>
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<td>Intellectual challenge</td>
<td>Research Opportunity</td>
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<td>Salary</td>
<td>Unique Position in Society</td>
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## What are some disadvantages of being a doctor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High Cost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Spent Training</td>
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<td>Long Hours</td>
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<td>Ambiguous</td>
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<td>Impact on Family, Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Level of Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant Uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unable to help/ Bad Outcomes</td>
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Research and Preparation: The Career

http://www.royalcollege.ca/public/resources/aboutcanmeds
Think of the Interview as a Meeting

• Purpose is to find out about the suitable match between you and the school
• The interviewers want to know: “Is this person one of us?”
  – Jeremiah Fleenor’s Medical School Interview Book
• Meeting to showcase the points you discussed in your application
• Be an active, enthusiastic participant – prepare an interview agenda!
Choose five or more key themes you want to communicate to the school during the interview.

• What makes you unique?
• Why are you a good fit for the program? As a doctor?
• What are your best 2-3 examples for each point to demonstrate your success?
• Know your weaknesses and areas you need to develop
• Be ready with open-ended questions for your interviewers
Types of Interview Questions

Behaviour-Based
Competency-Based
Ethical Questions
General Interview Questions

It's QUESTION TIME!!
Types of Questions

**Behaviour-Based:** Past experience predicts future performance.
- ‘Tell me about a time when you worked under pressure and how you handled the stress’
- ‘Describe a situation where you played a leadership role and had to make a decision that was not readily accepted by others’

**Competency Questions:** Skills needed for success on the job.
- ‘Tell me **HOW** you would approach. . .
- ‘Tell us what you see as the ‘core competencies’ required to do ‘X’

When you hear these question openings, get ready to provide an example!
Sample Topics:
Think of Examples

• Self-directed learning
• Time management
• Leadership
• Teamwork
• Initiative
• Creativity
• Communication
• Social determinants of health
• Advocacy
• Teaching
• Adaptability and the ability to cope with stress

• Self-motivation
• Working with under-serviced populations
• Commitment
• Achievement
• Problem solving
• Critical thinking
• Scientific reasoning
• Ability to communicate effectively
• Sensitivity to the needs of others

Reference: So, You Want to Be a Doctor, Eh?, Dr. Anne Berndl
Answering Questions

**STARR:**

**S - Situation:** Describe the setting/situation/problem

**T - Task:** Indicate what needed to be accomplished

**A - Action:** Detail the actions you took. Indicate your thought processes.

**R - Result:** Outline positive results and benefits

**R - Relevance:** Demonstrate your understanding of the relevance of the skills and/or the position

Rehearse, but don’t memorize your answers.
Strategy for Answering Questions

• Probe for further information to clarify question
• Choose best related examples
• Clearly indicate the skills/competencies used during the process
• Demonstrate that you know why you made a decision/action
• For negative outcomes, you can indicate what you learned or would do differently

Demonstrate key traits!

• Maturity, integrity, compassion, sincerity, honesty, originality, intellect, confidence, motivation
Managing Conflict Questions

• Think in advance of examples from your experience

• **Do not** talk negatively about people you worked with

• Focus on the steps you took to resolve/try to resolve the situation

• Why did you choose the steps you did? What was the result? What did you learn from the experience?

• Use STARR approach
Ethical Questions

• Opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to think critically...and like a doctor!
• Verbally demonstrate your thought process and how you came to your conclusion, i.e. consultation, then....
• Make a decision: Understand all perspectives
• Be honest with your opinion
• Be aware of your ‘hot button’ topics beforehand
• No right or wrong answers!
Answering Ethical Questions

Strategy for Organizing your Answer:

• Show them how you think: your step-by-step thought process
• What factors would you consider first?
• What action steps would you take and why?

Demonstrate an understanding for the general values of the practice of medicine
Other Types of Interview Questions

• Tell us why you want to be a doctor
• If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
• Based on a skill/hobby, explain to us how to do something
• If we have you and one applicant left and only one spot, why should we choose you?
• How does your academic record illustrate your strengths?

Reference: Laurier’s Career Centre Interview Guidebook
Other Possible Topics of Discussion

• Current Events
• Health care issues
• Ethical dilemmas
• Weaknesses
• Your goals: short-term and long-term
• Many others...
Weakness Questions

• Identify 2-3 genuine ‘weaknesses’ in advance
• Do not use ‘fake’ weaknesses
• Be prepared to talk about deficiencies in your application
• What steps have you taken/planning to take to improve your ‘weakness’?
• View this as a chance to show you are self-aware and are engaged in continuous personal and professional development.
The committee wants to know you are **SURE** of your career choice and are focused and committed to medicine.

- Identify your short-term and long-term goals.
- Be clear and realistic with your goal-setting.
- Show you have done your research!
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

• Great opportunity to demonstrate your cognitive and non-cognitive skills

• Station rotations, each with a different examiner
  – 10 minutes total: 2 minutes to prepare, 8 minutes to respond/act

• Think critically on your feet!

• Be sincere – don’t try to overthink the question
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- University of Alberta
- UBC
- University of Calgary
- Dalhousie
- University of Manitoba
- McGill
- McMaster
- Northern Ontario
- Queen’s – combination
- University of Saskatchewan
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- Non-cognitive skills/traits:
  - Ethical decision-making
  - Communication skills
  - Collaborative abilities
  - Critical thinking
  - Knowledge of health care system
  - Altruism, compassion, empathy, integrity
  - Problem solving
  - Negotiation
  - Maturity
  - Commitment to helping others
  - Creativity
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

• Advantages:
  – Non-biased
  – First impression with multiple interviewers
  – You can recover at next station if you perform poorly
  – Several interviewers providing input about you
  – You can repeat information at each station

• See Manual for Interviewers on McMaster Website
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- Sample scenarios:
  - Actor role playing
  - Collaboration (2 applicants) – puzzle building/drawing, team work, debating
  - Debate (2 applicants)
  - Ethical reasoning questions
  - Critical thinking questions
  - Video clips
  - Standard
  - Rest
  - Pilot
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- You don’t know which skill/attribute is being evaluated so answer the question that is presented.
- Be genuine, demonstrate maturity, etc.
- Take time to breathe between each station.
- Write down notes if you are given paper and pencil.
- You may be asked probing questions – which interviewers agree to in advance.
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

• Sample MMI demonstration:

http://www.med.ubc.ca/education/md_undergrad/MD_Undergraduate_Admissions/MD_Undergraduate_Interviews/Interview_Process_Demonstration.htm
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

- Sample from University of Calgary site:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/prospective/admissions/mmi/samples
Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)

• Sample MMI questions:

  – [http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog/interviews.html](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/mdprog/interviews.html)
Presenting Yourself: The Details

• Be polite to everyone you encounter!
• Attire – dress professionally
• Nervousness
• Pay equal attention to interviewers
• Body language: yours and your interviewers’
• Be attuned to tone, pace and pitch of your voice

**Most importantly: be genuine, enthusiastic & positive.**
Let’s Practice

• Divide into groups of 2-3
  1. Interviewee
  2. Interviewer
  3. Observer (if 3 people)
• Interviewer will ask Interviewee 2 questions.
• Provide constructive feedback.
• Switch roles.
Providing Constructive Feedback

Things to consider:

• Eye contact
• Body language
• Attitude - enthusiasm, interested
• Was the question answered clearly?
• Ability to understand and express skills, education, work experience, and activities?

What are some strengths and areas to improve?
References

- So, You Want to be a Doctor, eh? by Dr. Anne Berndl
- The Black Book on Canadian Medical Schools by Dr. Brett L. Ferdinand
- Doing Right by Philip C. Hébert
- The Medical School Interview by Dr. Jeremiah Fleenor
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario: Communications and Cultural Competence Program case scenarios: www.img-ccc.ca/about.html
- Student Doctor: www.studentdoctor.net
- Premed101.com

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