

Interviewing for Health Professions Schools

Tips from the Medical Careers Advisory Committee at The College of New Jersey

Interview Portion of Application Process

1. Indicates interest in you, and that you are considered academically qualified
2. Opportunity for the school to consider your personal qualities, such as honesty, integrity, leadership ability, decision making, empathy, etc
3. Opportunity for you to consider a particular school, its programs, philosophy, curriculum, mission, member hospitals, etc.

Preparation

1. Appearance
 - a. Act and dress professionally!
 - i. Men: coat/tie or suit; clean; well-groomed
 - ii. Women: suit, dress, or skirt and jacket; clean; modest
 - iii. Be aware of body language; try to be relaxed
2. Topics of Discussion - be prepared to speak to these possible topics:
 - a. The school - know all you can about it, from the website or other sources
 - i. TCNJ alums might be a source of great information
 - b. Your interest in the school, and medicine in general
 - c. Current issues in healthcare
 - i. There are many! Covid, masking, vaccination hesitation, burn-out, stem cells, health care, ObamaCare (Affordable Care Act), genetic engineering, Medicare, etc etc Can you discuss the pros and cons articulately?
 - ii. Suggested possible sources of information:
 1. *AMSA's The New Physician* (journal)
 2. *Journal of the Student National Medical Association*
 3. *The Healthcare Handbook*, by Elisabeth Askin and Nathan Moore
 4. www.statnews.com
 5. depts.washington.edu/bioethx/
 6. sps.columbia.edu/bioethics/premed
 - d. Current issues in the world - know a bit about significant issues, such as
 - i. Crisis areas
 - ii. Climate change and the environment
 - iii. Politics
 - iv. Cultural and sporting events
 - e. Most importantly, relax and be yourself!
 - i. Answer questions honestly, as you see them to be
 - ii. Be positive
 - iii. Take opportunities to mention your strong points and abilities
 - iv. Make eye contact, and interact positively with the interviewer
 - v. Speak clearly and thoughtfully
 - vi. The following are just some of the types of questions you may be asked:

Tell me about yourself.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Why have you chosen medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, etc. as a career?
 Why did you choose to major in...?
 What has been the most rewarding experience of your life?
 What have you read recently?
 Why do you want to go to this school?
 What do you think you could contribute to this school?
 Why do you think you are a good candidate?
 What do you consider your greatest weakness?
 What do you see as the greatest problem facing our health care system today?
 Tell me about your research.
 Tell me about your thesis.
 Tell me about your job/internship last summer.
 What was your most enjoyable course in college?
 How do you think the government should be responding to the uninsured in this country?
 What are your views on the Affordable Care Act?
 What exposure have you had to medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, etc.?
 How would you treat a patient with AIDS?
 How do you feel about using animals in scientific research?
 What extracurricular activity has been most rewarding for you?
 What field of medicine, dentistry, vet medicine, etc. most appeals to you?
 How would you weigh the advantages of a single party payer for national health care versus the disadvantages?
 What would you do if you were not accepted to med, dent, vet school?

3. Interview Types

- a. Standard - one or more interviewers chatting with you, asking about you, and trying to gauge the likelihood of your success at their medical school and at a medical career. It's also the opportunity for you to ask about the school and its program, mission, curriculum, etc.
- b. The MMI - multiple mini interview - a newer approach used by some schools (RWJ, for example). The *Medical School Admission Requirements* ("MSAR", from aamc.org) guide details what type of interview process med schools employ.
 - i. MMIs provide the med schools with an opportunity to see how applicants respond to a standard series of situations, and seek to minimize the subjective nature of standard interviews.
 - ii. Short ~5 min situations are designed to demonstrate a candidate's qualities, such as teamwork, problem-solving, flexibility, confidence, cultural sensitivity, professionalism, compassion, strengths, etc.
 - iii. A candidate responds to a series of 5 - 10 situations in the way they see fit, and the interviewer(s) can objectively evaluate the responses.
 - iv. There has been much positive feedback to this approach.

4. Interview Day

- a. At the school
 - i. Give yourself ample time to arrive, relax, and be ready. Look over their materials and literature to confirm your previous research on the school.

- ii. Take a tour, or an invitation for lunch, or a group information session if offered
 - iii. If possible, spend some time with a student if Admissions can arrange it, and ask questions about their experiences
 - b. Interview time
 - i. Expect one or probably more one-on-one interviews, with faculty and perhaps a student or two
 - ii. The interviewer(s) may or may not have read your file materials, so don't be frustrated if they ask questions that you have answered in your application
 - iii. Go with the flow of whatever happens during the interview
- 5. After Interview Day
 - a. The Admission Committee will eventually make a preliminary decision on the status of your application. It may take only days, or weeks or even months. They have hundreds of candidates to consider. Be patient!
 - b. Send a thank you letter to your interviewer, and any student you may have spent time with
 - c. You can send updated materials to the school to be added to your file, such as fall grades, or completion of a clinical experience.
 - d. Don't call the Admissions Office too early, or too often to ask about your application
 - e. Make sure to follow the protocols, or "traffic rules" pertaining to multiple acceptances and making a choice, such as: If you have been accepted at a school, you can "hold" that spot; but if another acceptance comes along that you prefer, make sure you withdraw from and release that first spot, so that it can be made available for another student.

Other Resources

- 1) *Interviewing for Health Professions Schools*, available for purchase from NAAHP, www.naahp.org, offers a concise set of tips with input from many admissions deans.
- 2) Resources available through the AAMC such as
 - *Aspiring Docs "Ask The Experts"*: <https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/basics/280914/interview.html>
 - AAMC's "Thirty-Five Questions I Wish I Had Asked" at www.aamc.org/students/applying/310556/selectingamedicalschoolthirtyfivequestionsiwishihadasked .
 - AAMC Podcast on Interviewing Basics: Go to www.aamc.org/podcasts/aspiringdocs/ for podcasts provided by the AAMC and Aspiring Docs. (no charge at the iTunes store).

MSAR: Getting Started has a section on preparing for interviews that includes information on inappropriate questions and how to respond to them.

(Adapted from a Tufts University document shared with the NAAHP)