Medical School Interview

Pearls and Pitfalls

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To be invited …

- On track to complete prerequisites prior to matriculation
- MCAT taken, scores released
- AMCAS application completed, verified
- Secondary application completed
- Transcripts, letters received
- AND. . .
BCPM GPA + MCAT

BCPM GPA is in a competitive range
EDP:  ≥ 3.6 and MCAT ≥ 9-9-9
RDP: BCPM GPA and MCAT are on a sliding scale

Example: BCPM 3.6   MCAT 23
          BCPM 2.6   MCAT 33
Exceptions to “automatic” interview cutoff:

- Post baccalaureate work shows a strong, positive trend in BCPM GPA.

- Graduate BCPM GPA strong, big improvement over undergraduate BCPM.

Pearl: You can overcome sub par undergraduate BCPM GPA with additional academic work—must be substantial amount, challenging, and high performance.
So when you “make the cut”

- What to expect
- What UMC is looking for in an applicant
- Pearls and Pitfalls for interview
Interview invitation

- You will receive e-mail inviting you to interview.
- You will call the AO to schedule interview
  - Morning
  - Afternoon

You will also be invited to lunch with upper classmen, followed by a tour.
Interview Process

- Committee members and staff will meet you in person.

- You will answer questions, tell us more about your preparation, motivation, etc.

- You will have a chance to visit the school and meet some faculty and students.
What can you expect?
Interviewers seek to assess:

- **Communication, listening and relational skills**: speech; body language; eye contact; the ability to articulate ideas and opinions; clarity of expression; the ability to listen; ability to relate personal experiences.
- **Respect for others**: tolerance; the ability to relate to others in a nonjudgmental manner, appreciation for race/culture/gender differences.
- **Motivation for medicine**: the who, what, when, where, and why of an applicant's desire for medicine as a career; alternate career plans.
- **Vision of practice**: community where it may be located, private versus hospital, specialty.
- **Critical thinking/problem solving/decision making**: the ability to analyze a situation, consider the available facts, and derive a logical conclusion.
- **Honesty/integrity**: consistent regard for highest standards of behavior.
- **Maturity**: self-reliance, ability to make decisions and respond to circumstances or environment in an appropriate manner. The ability to control emotions, to find solutions to problems, to have a sense of responsibility; the probability that applicant can live and function away from home.
- **Accountability/reliability**: fulfilling implied contracts, persistence and determination in pursuing goals.
- **Altruism/compassion/empathy**: commitment to service and the ability to draw satisfaction from working with others; placing others' interests above self; kindness, sympathy towards others; social interests.
- **Awareness of ethics/values**: sense of right/wrong; ability to act in the best interest of others; respect others' autonomy, preserve dignity, recognize and avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Excellence**: efforts to exceed ordinary expectations.
- **Setting priorities**: for academic study, MCAT® preparation, achievement of career goals.
- **Self appraisal**: recognize personal strengths/weaknesses; goals and commitment to self-improvement.
- **Coping skills**: ability to overcome adversity.
- **Support system**: supportive relationships with family, spouse or friends.
Why is the interview done in person?
Non-cognitive variables

- Communication
  (verbal and nonverbal!)
- Respect for others
- Motivation
- Critical thinking
- Honesty/Integrity
- Maturity

- Accountability
- Altruism/compassion/empathy
- Ethics/Values
- Excellence
- Setting Priorities
- Self Appraisal
Non-verbal communication...

Timeliness
Appearance
Body language
Voice, volume

Energy level
Eye contact
Maturity

Professionalism
Attitude
Interview Day P&P

**DO:**
- Show up on time
- Appearance: neat, clean, well-groomed, professional attire
- Wear comfortable shoes!

**DON’T**
- Forget to silence your cell phone!!!
Pitfalls I have seen...

- Very casual clothing
  (applicant was uncomfortable—all others in business attire)

- Extremely high-heeled shoes
  (Painful feet were a great distraction—this applicant walked in pain!)
Pearls

- Conservative dress--business attire.
  (Look like a professional!)
- Comfortable shoes
- Turn cell phone off or leave it in the car!
- Neatly groomed.
- Arrive at the expected time.
Pearls

- Take a few deep breaths before you come into the AO—and RELAX!!!
- Be yourself.

- If “being yourself” means you are too intimidated to speak, you might not be ready for medical school.
Pearls

Pay attention to your speaking volume.

– Speak up, speak clearly but don’t BLAST people out of the room.

  – Sufficient volume to appear confident, but not overbearing or arrogant.

  – You can practice appropriate volume by this skill with people in their 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, and even 70’s and beyond.
LOUD voice, blasted the interviewer.

Everyone could hear every word through the doors, walls, etc.

Interviewer thoughts: “Will this person yell at every patient?”
Pitfall...too quiet
(AKA “the whisperer”)

- More nervous than average, too quiet to be heard
  - Nerves, jitters
  - Scared to death

- Interviewer thoughts:
  - Is this person strong enough for medical school?
  - Will patients, students, physicians intimidate this person?
  - Is there something to hide?
Pearls:

- Applicant who presents well:
  - Makes eye contact
  - Listens, answers questions
  - Does not appear “rehearsed”
  - Does not “talk over” the interviewer
  - Does not “ramble on”

- Interviewer thoughts:
  - He/she is attentive and easy to talk to.
  - Patients will be comfortable with this person.
  - This person seems to be mature and strong
Pearl

Sit up!
Pitfalls-don’t

Slouch down
Wiggle around (ants in the pants!)
Squirm
Avoid eye contact
Stare without blinking!
Twirl hair constantly
Try to read your file
Always looking away...
Common mistakes

Not answering questions

Q: “Tell me about what made you decide to become a doctor.”

A: “Um…..well …. (long silence)… what?”
Common questions:

How have you prepared for medical school?

- Good answer: talk about your undergraduate coursework, health care experience, personal reflection, etc.
- Bad answer: don’t talk about preparation for medical school.
Common question

“Tell me how you prepared for the MCAT.”

– Good answer: tell how you prepared for the MCAT. If you are preparing to take it again, tell that too.

– Bad answer: make excuses why you didn’t prepare for the MCAT, and why you shouldn’t have to.
Common question

Scenario in which you must choose the right course of action.

– Good answer: listen, think, choose the right course of action, answer.
– Bad answer: blurt out response without thinking.
Important!!!
Remember this... It's not about you anymore.

It's about your future patients!
Final thoughts about interview

- The interview is not designed to intimidate you.

- Once you are invited for interview, you have survived the “first cut.”
  - About half of the people who interview will be accepted.
  - Some of the interviewed applicants will become alternates.

- The number of alternates who will be admitted varies from year to year.
AO staff are your friends!

AO office staff:
- Coordinate your visit.
- Schedule your interview
- Answer your questions
- Direct you to interview location
- Provide you with a card with names, titles
- Handle everything about your application file

AO staff also:
- Make your experience better
- Put you at ease
For more information

http://som.umc.edu/admissions.html
The End

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