Interviewing for Professional Health Programs

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First Things First. . .

- Allows you to make a final impression.
- Interviews are a two way street:
  - Allows you to see institutional fit.
  - How the school will prepare you as a professional.
- The interview starts WAY before you arrive on campus (every person you interact with counts, so be nice, kind, and professional when talking to everyone at the school).
Why Do Schools Interview?

• Competitive application process.
• “Will patients be able to openly talk to this candidate?”
• Allows schools to learn about your:
  – Communication skills.
  – Motivation, enthusiasm, and empathy/sincerity.
  – Ability to work with diverse groups of people.
  – Initiative and assertiveness.
  – Punctuality and appearance.
  – Likeability.
  – Leadership and maturity.
No Second Chance. . .

• Plan on what you are wearing (head to toe) way before invited for an interview.
• Dress the part--don’t make it hard for them to imagine you as a professional.
• Practice good hygiene.
• Note the small details (scuffed shoes, dirty/chewed nails, loose buttons, etc.).
• Be prepared for anything (weather, wrinkles, lost luggage, etc.).
Women

- Black/dark pant suit or skirt suit (to knee and wear hose).
- Collared shirt or blouse (no plunging neckline and always tucked in).
- Jacket on.
- Conservative shoes (low heel and no open toe).
- Professional make-up and hair: no bright lipstick or nail polish.
- No scrunchies or pony tail (pulled back or bun is ok).
- No perfume.
Men

• Don’t assume high school graduation suit still fits.
• Get *fitted* by a professional and select a classic cut/color (black/dark).
• Pay attention to shoes and socks.
• Avoid scruffiness---get a haircut and trim nails.
• Can show individuality with tie (proper length).
• If new suit, check jacket’s vent and cut tack.
• No cologne.
For Example…

Quinn Capers, IV @DrQuinnCapers4 · Feb 5
Interview Day @OhioStateMed (#33 of 50)! Today we welcome candidates from @UMich @cwru @OhioState @DukeU @JohnsHopkins @TuftsUniversity @PennState @FIU @UDaytonNews @ASU @VanderbiltU. Good luck to all! @AAMCPresMed @NAAHPInc @PreMed_StAR
What Else To Bring. . .

- Check weather.
- Folder (info on the school, questions you’d like answered, note paper) and two nice pens.
- Copies of everything you sent the school.
- Additional information you want the school to have (i.e. updated resume).
- Money, mints, anti-bacterial hand gel, Kleenex.
- Small sewing kit for emergencies.
Packing

- Carry on bag for interview outfit and toiletry bag.
- Pack to minimize.
- Check to see if hotel has iron.
- If flying out right after interview, most schools have spot for you to park your suitcase. Check with the school to see if this offer stands and be courteous of this offer (don’t have TONS of luggage).
WAY Before The Interview

• Know yourself and application materials backwards and forwards.
• Be prepared to talk about yourself and verbalize your feelings.
• Put yourself in situations where you challenge yourself socially.
• Let your professors know you are interviewing.
Ways to Prepare Yourself

• Be ready to make small talk.
• Talk with others about ethical situations.
• Learn about current healthcare issues (read field relevant journals, magazines, websites).
• Watch the news and know current events (especially for the region in which you are interviewing).
• Absorb all you can about the school/region (internet, current students, area newspaper, etc.).
• Expect the unexpected during interview season yet get plenty of sleep and exercise.
• Confirm, a couple of days ahead of time, your interview.
For The Big Day

• Recognize it’s an all day endeavor.
• Wake up early and eat breakfast.
• Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early.
• Know how you’ll get from the hotel/airport to the interview site.
• Remember that the interview starts before you meet with the interviewers (interact with other interviewees, students, staff, etc.).
• Don’t underestimate the power of a handshake.
• Turn your cellphone OFF (no vibrate)!
• Be yourself and relax!
Typical Day of Interview

• Normally, there will be 5 to 20 students a day.
• Start with an introduction, tour, financial aid meeting, lunch, then interview(s).
• May interview with alumni, faculty, staff, students, professionals who may/may not be on the admissions committee.
• May have one or two 30-60 minute interviews.
• Usually, you will have a lunch break in the school’s cafeteria with students.
• If you request early enough, you may be able to sit in on a class (I highly recommend it).
Tips to Keep In Mind

• Be nice to everyone!!!!
• Don’t get intimidated when talking with other students.
• Don’t be too humble or cocky.
• Treat EVERY aspect of the day (and evening, if staying with a student) as part of the interview process.
• Don’t bring anyone to the interview.
• Again, cellphone OFF and DON’T look at your phone.
Interview Tips

• Listen.
• Present yourself as a professional.
• Don’t appear “plastic” or overly rehearsed.
• Be ready for small talk.
• Notice your body language, hands, and posture.
• Be mindful of fidgeting.
• Appear engaged at every point of the day (don’t look at phone, have your eyes wander around, not pay attention to people, etc.).
• Make eye contact.
• Breathe while you talk.
• Can interject appropriate humor--smile.
• Don’t drift off at end of responses.
• Pay attention to your tone/inflection (monotone).
• Don’t give vague responses or what you THINK they want to hear.
More Interview Tips

• Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know.” (“I’ve never been to the High Museum, but after talking about your experience there, I plan to go!”)
• Watch for “Um,” “Like,” “Uh,” and other stall tactics.
• You can pause to think of an answer (“That’s a good question. Let me think about that for a minute.”).
• If you misspeak or want to add something, clarify it before you leave the interview room (“Earlier you asked about X. I said Y, but the more I think about it, I think it is Z.”).
• Don’t pay attention to what they write regarding your answers.
• You may want to write down three questions for the interviewer/s, so you don’t forget. Make sure question is appropriate for interviewer.
• Don’t be afraid of silence and avoid rambling to fill silence.
Be Prepared To Hear. . .

• Tell me about yourself.
• How did you get interested in this field?
• Why are you applying to XYZ school?
• What was your favorite class and why?
• What do you do in your free time?
• What questions do you have for me?
Students Struggle With. . .

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to be a doctor?
- What would you do if not accepted this cycle?
- Can you tell me why your GPA is a 3.2 and your MCATs are a 36?
- What’s your greatest strength? Weakness?
- Do you have any questions for us?
After The Big Day

- Write a nice thank-you note (try to send same day, if possible) and remind them of something from your interview. Can be emailed.
- Make notes, while your memory is still fresh about the school/interview.
- Check your outfit REALLY well and get it cleaned if needed (both pieces together).
- Get ready for the next interview!
Good Luck!