

# MEDICAL STUDENT INTERVIEW PREPARATION

*Three and one-half-years of preparation got you in the door. Don't drop the ball!*

- **SCHEDULING**

- There is really no “recommended” time in the interview season to schedule your favorite programs. Middle of the interview season is probably best.
- Remember your first few interviews – you’ll be getting your “feet wet”.
- At the end of the interview season, you may be tired and burnt out and your answers may begin to sound rehearsed.
- If there are programs you schedule but are really unsure if you want to go on the interview, schedule them for a late date in January so that there is sufficient time to cancel if you get enough interviews.
- When a scheduling conflict arises, it's OK to call to see if another date can be arranged, but don't be persistent if the program coordinator says it's not possible.
- NEVER be a NO SHOW. Always cancel with sufficient time – minimum of a week but preferably as soon as you know.
- Do **not** assume course instructors will automatically excuse you from classes because you're a senior during the interview season. Be sure to request the time and if your schedule gets overloaded, you may need to re-schedule the course.

- **RESEARCH PROGRAMS – INTERVIEW SEASON PREPARATION**

- Be prepared, read over your ERAS applications and your personal statement prior to interview
- Make a list of your top strengths, goals, values, accomplishments and abilities to use as a general reference for all interview questions.
- Be aware of any weaknesses in your application and prepare how you will answer those questions if asked. Think of the positive things you did to overcome the difficulties.
- If you're concerned about certain questions you may be asked, speak with a faculty advisor, your Clinical Assistant Dean or Christoforou or Terracina. We can help!
- Prepare at least one case, preferably two. If you're a student whose academic record is:
  - Not as good on paper as you would like...a technical case (shows you are bright)
  - Good on paper...a psychosocial case (shows you are empathetic)
- Know something unique about your medical school, awards, projects.
- Browse through the Medical Section of the New York Times
- Know something about the Health Care Finance Administration, GME, current manpower needs.
- Find out as much as you can about each individual program
  - Visit their website
  - Know something about the community they serve.
  - Review any information they may send you
  - If you know the names of your interviewers, see if you can find out their subspecialty or research interests.
  - Speak to Downstate grads either before you interview or certainly after when you're making decisions about ranking.

- **THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW**

- Dress Code
  - Dress conservatively, tasteful, neat
  - Suits are strongly recommended
  - Do not wear excessive jewelry or strong cologne/perfume
- Be prepared for bad weather – umbrella, boots etc...
- Bring a picture/CV/personal statement/updated projects
- Be punctual, map out the morning trip
- If out of town, read the local paper that morning.
- You're "on" from when you leave your home.
  - You never know who will encounter on your way to the interview. Be sure to smile at everyone you meet along the way/
- Be careful with caffeinated products coffee/tea.
- Don't eat the powdered cream donuts while waiting to be interviewed!!
- Treat Administrator and Clerical Staff with respect
- Make sure you know what you're doing with your "stuff" if you have to take it with you to the actual interview room – try not to be awkward picking up your things and trying to coordinate a handshake when meeting your interviewer,

- **THE INTERVIEW ITSELF**

- Turn off your cell phone
- Body language and eye contact
  - When called to begin interview, make eye contact with the interviewer, firm handshake and SMILE!
  - Keep up with interviewer when walking
  - When entering the room, sit where the interviewer suggests
  - Make eye contact throughout the interview
  - Look for signs that the interview is over and leave promptly, do not linger and ask additional questions after the interview is over.
- Be POSITIVE!
  - If asked how your trip was to the interview, respond positively even if you had a difficult time getting there.. (i.e. It was no problem at all, your instructions were perfect, I mapped out the trip yesterday so it was fine...)
  - Do not talk negatively about your school or other programs
- Have confidence – not arrogance
- Interviewers may be junior, may not have skills
  - If questions are not bringing out your strengths, try to get your point across by supplementing answers to questions with additional information.
- You want to come across as smart, manageable, energetic and hard-working.
- You should have a couple of questions prepared to ask at the end of the interview
  - Prepare the interviewer – "Yes, I do have two questions I would like to ask..."
  - See handout for sample questions
- Be interested and involved on the tour
- Ask to stay and observe
- Don't let your guard down when meeting with residents – they're evaluating you too!

- **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- Immediately after the interview, write notes about the program. You will be surprised at how much you will forget about individual programs after you've interviewed at several places. It will start to become a blur. It will make ranking programs easier if you have notes.
- Thank you cards
  - You should definitely send thank you notes.
  - Most faculty recommend hand written notes sent through snail-mail, although e-mail thank yous are becoming more common.
  - One thank you to the Program Director is fine.
  - If you decide to send to each interviewer don't say the same exact thing to each one – try to personalize.
- Second Looks
  - Scheduled visits to programs after the interview
  - Can help you make ranking decisions for top choices
  - Can demonstrate genuine interest to a program
  - Some programs do not schedule Second Looks
  - If program did not emphasize Second Looks being important – it is not necessary to schedule one. Do NOT schedule cross country second looks – overkill.
  - Do NOT show up for a Second Look unannounced. Must be scheduled.
- Email Interest Letters
  - As the interview season closes (late January, early February) and it gets closer to applicants and programs submitting their rank lists, most students will send an email indicating their interest in a program to the residency program director.
  - Do NOT tell a program they will be your #1 choice if in fact they are not. This could be considered a Match Violation.
  - You can tell a program you are very interested in them and you will rank them “highly on your list” and that you would “love to be in their program”.
  - Programs should NOT be asking you where you will rank them – it is considered a Match Violation.