Interviewing at Health Professions Schools
Please sign in and take handouts.
If you are in the application cycle, please fill out/take interview report forms.
Interviews are the final step in the screening process.
By the time you get an interview, you have narrowed your chance of admission from about 1 in 100 to 1 in 5
Prescreening to choose interviewees is not as precise as the post-interview selection system.

Interviewing is not a random process.
Why do the schools conduct interviews?
They need to differentiate candidates that look equally strong on the application.
They want to recruit applicants who will have choices to choose them.
They want to investigate concerns in person.
Why do people with better applications get passed over by other candidates?
Every school has a “fitness” agenda.
Some “fit” factors are obvious:
State residency, MCAT quotas, family connections, school articulation agreements.
Other “fit” factors include:
primary care vs academic medicine orientation
augmenting or reducing diversity
extroverted or introverted personality type
What do I do to get interview requests beyond completing the application?
The art of the update:
Connect in meaningful ways on a regular basis.
Update “don’ts”

• Calling/emailing to ask about the school’s selection process.

• Calling/emailing to make sure your application is complete.
Update “Do’s”

• Find a new service or extracurricular academic activity and pursue it, so you have something to tell them.
• Improvement in grades
• Accomplishments that show productivity in research.
• Legacy markers in activities where you have developed leadership
Types of Interviews

Structured vs unstructured

Unstructured interviews are more personal to the interviewer and tend to be more unexpected in content.
Types of Interview formats

• *Panels* (Usually structured)
• *One-on-one* (Most common form of unstructured interview, but also used for structured interviews)
• *MMIs* (Structured: Multiple Mini Interviews)
• *Combinations* (Structured; e.g., NYU)
Types of Interviews

Unstructured interviews rely on the applicant to establish rapport over 30 minutes to an hour of conversation.

They are subjective. The interviewer will be your advocate to the committee.
Types of Interviews

Interviewers giving unstructured interviews have usually reviewed many parts of your folder.

Often part of the folder is held back to reduce bias.
Types of Interviews

Unstructured:
They might know only your academic factors: GPA, MCAT, ranking in your college cohort.

They might know only your non-academic factors from the application.

They might have read only your letters and personal statement.
Types of Interviews

You can ask them what they have reviewed of your application materials to make sure you get a chance to highlight your strengths.
Types of Interviews

Structured interviews fall on a continuum from providing set questions interviewers are mandated to ask, to using the personal competencies to set up questions.

Holistic review-trained schools use them.
Types of Interviews

Structured interviews are fairer to you and give you more control over the outcome.
Types of Interviews

Structured interviews usually use quantitative rating systems.
How are the interview days organized?
Interview Day

Check in (early): Receive schedule
Orientation
Tour
First interview, Second Interview or MMI series
Lunch
Talks on financial aid, special programs
Class attendance
Uncommonly used techniques: Paper and pencil exercises, such as problem solving and essay writing.
Question Categories

Situational judgment

Often are concerned with how you conduct yourself professionally when you see something that is morally difficult being done by an authority figure.
Situational Judgment

• Verbally distinguish your own inner view from your unbiased observation.

• Show curiosity not conviction when asked how you might speak up. Show restraint about what you think you know.

• Give reasons to show you sympathetically understand how a healthcare professional can communicate in a way that might be beneath his own standards.
Question Categories

Behavioral descriptors are used to rank candidates.
The MMI

The MMI can be seen as unit building blocks of other types of interviews.
Why MMI?
The problems these efforts address are profound. Dr. Leora Horwitz, an assistant professor of medicine at Yale, recalled an incident in her residency at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York when a medical student marched into the hospital room of an elderly minister surrounded by his wife and several parishioners.

“And he announces in front of everyone: ‘We found the reason for your problem. The syphilis test is positive,’ ” Dr. Horwitz said. “It was a devastating event for the family and the whole church, and this student had no sense for that.”
How to Prepare
Read about healthcare

- Doctor’s stories
- New York Times Health Section
- Breakthroughs in treatment
- Role of research and technology in healthcare
- Circumcision/abortion/assisted suicide
Practice answering questions

Cornell Career Services Library has student interview report forms.
Student Doctor has lots of sample questions.
Why do you want to become a doctor?
Why do you want to study at this school?
Self Knowledge

Read your application materials with an eye to understand and articulate, in a brief and compelling way:

What you did
Why you did it
What you gained/How you developed from it
How it may have helped to prepare you
Self Knowledge

Turn negatives into positives
Avoid blame and complain assiduously!
Talking about failures in an interesting and confident way shows humility.
Articulate how weaknesses are strengths.
Derive meaning from the adverse experiences.
Self Knowledge

The good stuff in your application

Do express personal satisfaction with gratitude.
Do talk up the team.
Do not boast.
Self-Knowledge

How do you add diversity to your class?
Stuff to watch out for

• Inappropriate questions
• Strange questions
• Internet presence
• The interview that goes badly in general
• Modest attire
• Monitor hygiene from top to toe
Stuff to watch out for

Nerves
Feedback

• The more I do, the better I feel
• The MMI was actually a lot of fun
• Everyone was really nice.
• It felt like they wanted me at the school.
• It was great to meet the students; they seem really happy.
In the end, two words can summarize the entire task of interviewing well.
Be yourself