

Interview Summary: University of Iowa College of Medicine (EDP) – 15 September, 2000

Congratulations! If you are reading this summary, it seems very likely that you have successfully completed two-thirds of your admissions process to medical school. You've worked hard for many years to prepare yourself academically, socially, and psychologically for the field of medicine. You are to be commended for your efforts. Not everyone is invited to interview, so someone on some committee obviously thinks you have what it takes to be a physician. But, for you it doesn't end there. You are going to be a GOOD physician, and that is precisely what the interviewers need to know.

Briefly, my interview experience proceeded as expected.

When should I arrive?

I arrived in Iowa City the night before my scheduled visit. It was helpful that night to orient myself to the health sciences campus. If possible, I would recommend arriving the night before, especially if you are unfamiliar with the campus. Even that basic early preparation is one less distraction for you on interview day. If you intend to travel in the morning, give yourself plenty of time. The key point here is you don't want to be late. That makes all parties involved a little too anxious.

What happens when I get there?

The first hour (9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.) was spent getting to know the other interviewees and meeting the admissions counselors and financial aid advisors. It was a relaxing time. No one is critiquing you until your actual interview time. At 10:00 the interviews began. Mine was at 11:30 a.m., the last of eleven applicants, so there was plenty of time to ponder my approach and the key points I wanted to make.

What are the other interviewees like?

I had time to mingle with the other applicants. Everyone was very easy to talk to and nervous. Remember, at their core, all of the other interviewees feel the same as you. Fortunately, the only person you have to worry about is yourself. Enjoy meeting these people who share interests similar to yours.

What about the actual interview?

Two interviewers were assigned to my room. I was the last of four interviewees they saw that day – a difficult position. Both were medical school faculty and neither were M.D.s. Their focus was research in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, both of which are strong departments at the University of Iowa. The formal portion of the interview lasted about 15-20 minutes. Five questions were asked in a form similar to that given in your invitation letter:

- 1) Why do you want to become a physician?
- 2) What personal characteristics and past experiences will make you a good physician? (Remember: You are going to be a GOOD physician.)
- 3) When was a time you showed compassion or care for another human being?
- 4) How do you intend to handle the stress of medical school?
- 5) Describe a time when you were struggling and needed to ask for help.

I imagine you and I feel similar about these questions. They have already been answered on your AMCAS, personal statement, secondary application, and letters of recommendation. Fortunately the interviewers are given none of this information, so redundancy is not an issue. If sharing situations similar to those on your AMCAS that best describe your character and motivation, then those are great experiences. Be yourself when answering and let them do the evaluating. They followed up the formal portion with more specific questions (e.g. elaboration on medical experiences I had shared, where I would project medicine to be when I complete medical school, how I believe the medical profession will change my life). I asked a couple of questions as well. Everyone walks away with a different experience and feeling, but remember, everyone walks away. The rest of the day is cake.

Tips

A few tips for your approach; however, they are merely my own opinion:

Everyone involved is a professional

Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How? – Which of these questions have the most interesting answers? Show them you are interesting.

Interesting people are interested in people: Let them know who you are, but don't focus on yourself and your accomplishments. What people have influenced your decisions? That person you helped, what was his/her name?

A concise and confident answer is respected and remembered better than a vague, involved answer. Physicians are concise.

Good luck on your interview.