

# Interviewing for Medical School: A perspective from both sides of the table.

By Jeannine C. Wills, MSIV

## Before The Interview:

**A. Find out about the school.** Knowledge of the program you are applying to demonstrates interest and will help you find out what you are getting into!

1. Read the packet the school sent you. Get a feel for what the school is like and what certain programs the school is known for.
2. Talk to students, admission officers, and professors, if possible.
3. Get on the INTERNET! Most, if not all, schools have web pages where you can find valuable information. There are also some class/med school organization web pages that can be helpful to your investigation.
4. Answer for yourself the following questions:  
*What contribution can you make to this school?*  
*Why is this school suited to you?*

**B. Know Thyself.** Write out answers to the following questions and PRACTICE! Videotape yourself if you are so inclined:

1. *Why do I want to be a doctor?*

Bad Answer: I had a sick relative.

Good Answer: Through my extensive research and clinical experience in the medical field (give examples) I have come to the conclusion that medicine is the only career for me. It is OK to have a sick relative spark the interest, but this had better not be the only thing!

2. *What was my research all about?*

Write out and practice a summary of your research. Make it basic, relevant and to

the point. Keep in mind that your interviewer most likely does not know the details of your research field, so try to make it sound relevant and like you played a relevant role (yes, literature searches are relevant). Do not bore a busy interviewer with details of the agar plates, unless they ask!! Do a quickie medline

search on your topic to update yourself on the recent happenings in your area. You will look like a star when you say “the other literature on this topic shows...”

3. *What did I get out of my volunteer experience?*

Be prepared to give specifics. Doctor/patient interaction is, of course, preferable to pushing carts! Do not stress number of hours (unless it is VERY high!).

4. *What are my strengths and weaknesses?*

Good generic strengths: organized, a leader, hard worker, people oriented, sense of humor, creativity, confidence, compassion.

Be sure to pick weaknesses that are not major character flaws and cannot be repaired (such as laziness!). Cliché: Perfectionist(!). No one buys it. Others: works too hard, too involved with patients. In a pinch, try humor: “I can’t swim” or “I like occasional cigars,” if your interviewer appears to have a sense of humor! Now you are ready to do mock interviews. It will reduce your stress level to have practiced in a

nonjudgmental setting. Have your interviewer be as hard on you as possible.

## **During The Interview:**

### **A. Practice Considerations.**

1. Dress/Appearance: THINK DOCTOR! No, not plaid golf pants and bad shoes, but clothing that does not make you stand out as anything other than neat, conservative, and well groomed. Men: standard suit and tie, cut your goldilocks, and leave your earrings/nose ring at home! Women: may wear a skirt, but make sure it is not more than a little above the knee. Use muted makeup colors, small jewelry, have short, clean nails, and NO BIG HAIR. Preferably, no perfume or cologne. Try not to make fashion statements. They will be lost on that 60-year-old interviewer who has lived in the hospital for the past 20 years.
2. Arrive early.
3. Pay attention to your behavior. Interact with the other students. You are being observed! One of the questions on our interview report is regarding interview behavior. Are you fidgety, nervous, antisocial, etc.?

**B. Bring samples of your work.** That way, you can offer the interviewer a copy of your publication or any other amazing work that they can remember you by.

### **C. Be enthusiastic.**

1. Be enthusiastic about yourself (if you are not, who will be?)
2. About the school – the interviewers are a part of the school and may take it personally if you don't seem interested!
3. Explain all about your experiences (research, clinical, etc.) and how it has framed your decision to come to medical school. In other words, know yourself and why you are here. If you don't know why you are here, that could be a problem. Med school is no joke and neither is being a doctor.
4. What else about you makes you unique? You have coached little league, you have great leadership experience, you travel, you support your family. The unique aspects of you or your work is what interviewers tend to remember most.

### **D. Interview the Interviewer.**

1. Always have questions to ask at the end. Spontaneous ones are better, but canned ones will do in a pinch: What is your typical day like? Are you happy here? What kind of clinical training opportunities are available for first and second years? Have you had time to do research? Are grants available for student initiated research?

### **E. Last Minute thoughts:**

1. KNOW deep down that you can do it and that you will make a compassionate motivated physician.
2. RELAX. Have a sense of humor. If you don't have one, then at least SMILE and be pleasant.
3. KNOW that most interviewers WANT to write you a good report.

## **After The Interview:**

**A. Write a personal thank you note.**

**B. Deliver it ASAP.** It shows your consideration and interest, and it may get there before the report is written, leaving a final favorable impression.

**C. Follow up with the school** by telephone or in person if you are very interested.

*Source: UC Irvine Medical School Reapplicant  
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