

## **HEALTH PROFESSIONS OFFICE**

### **PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW**

(This is written for the student going to a medical school interview, but the same general advice can be applied to almost any kind of interview.)

Medical schools that are seriously considering your application will invite you to an interview. Depending on the school, about 20% to 50% of those students interviewed by a medical school will be accepted so it is important that you spend time preparing for the interview.

The first thing to do is check the Web to find out what interviews are like at that particular school ([www.interviewfeedback.com](http://www.interviewfeedback.com)). This will give you information about the format of the interview, questions asked, and in many cases how to get there and where to stay.

When you get to your interview try your best to be confident. You would not be there if you were not a strong candidate. Be sincere, be honest, and try to be relaxed. In other words, just be yourself. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer, smile, shake hands firmly, do not slump in your chair, and do not use slang. Do not try to impress the interviewer or you may come over as being cocky. Men should wear a coat and tie and women should wear a suit or a dress. Dress conservatively but memorably; you want the interviewer to remember you the next day even if he/she interviewed twenty students the day you were interviewed. (Most men wear white shirts and red ties. To be memorable avoid that combination. Most women wear navy blue or black suits. Avoid these colors unless you wear an interesting blouse, scarf, pin, etc.)

Before you go to your interview, reread your application. You want to make sure that you know everything about yourself that the interviewer knows. Browse through the catalog and the web site of the school to familiarize yourself with the school's history, its character, the curriculum, and any special programs it may have. At some point during the interview you will probably be asked if you have any questions. It is a good idea to have at least one question to show your interest in the school, but you want to avoid asking anything that you could have easily learned by reading the catalog or the web site. For example, you can ask the interviewer about his/her field/research, about his/her impressions of student-faculty relationships at the medical school, where in relationship to the school most medical students live, etc. Try to get to the interview early so you can walk around the school (maybe even take a tour), and read the bulletin boards in the medical school. If you can, get in touch with a UCSB graduate who attends the school who might be able to give you helpful hints for a successful interview at that particular school. Medical students tend to be very sympathetic because they have recently been through this very process. Remember, you may get into several schools and this will probably be your only opportunity to determine how happy you would be at this school. But never let an interviewer think that you would only go to his/her school as a last resort.

Interviewers are faculty members and medical students who may or may not be members of the admissions committee. Sometimes they will have had access to your application before the interview; sometimes the interviews are "blind." A blind interview is one in which the interviewer is told nothing about the student before the interview. Spend some time thinking about how to start a blind interview to your best advantage.

Interviewers will be trying to access your maturity, empathy, motivation, and enthusiasm for a career in medicine. They are trying to access your commitment to a medical career and the reason behind your choice of that career. They want to know if you are socially responsible, and they are trying to judge whether you will be good with patients. They may also want to determine if you have a realistic view of the profession, if you are familiar with current trends and controversies in the profession, and if you are aware of the changing nature of the practice of medicine. So pay attention to articles in magazines such as Time and Newsweek that discuss the field in which you intend to devote your life. There is a file of recent articles in the Health Professions Office. You will not be expected to have strong opinions about (or answers to) some of the current issues but you should be aware of them and be able to discuss them intelligently. Think carefully in advance about what your responses to questions you can anticipate will be. But never memorize any answers. It is impossible for a memorized answer to sound unrehearsed.

Some interviewers believe that by asking a question that backs you into a corner or makes you angry is a good way to see how you react under pressure. If this happens, remain calm, and do not become angry. Most importantly do not be afraid to admit when you do not know the answer to a particular question. Remember "honesty is always the best policy."

Rarely are students completely happy about how they did in the interview. The most important feeling to have when it is all over is that you have had the opportunity to tell the interviewers everything you wanted to. If you feel that you have had a particularly bad interview that was not your fault, discuss it with Dr. Bruce and she will determine what remedy, if any, should be taken.

**Below are some common questions that students have reported being asked at interviews:**

Why do you want to be a doctor?

(This question sounds easy but it is a difficult question to answer honestly and intelligently.)

When did you decide you wanted to be a doctor?

What have you done to show your motivation toward medicine?

What do you see as your biggest problem as a future physician?

What do you think will be the most difficult aspect of your medical training?

How do you think your personality will change when you become a doctor?

What experiences have you had in your community that demonstrate your commitment to medicine?

What do you think are a doctor's social responsibilities?

Why did you go to UCSB?

Tell me about UCSB.

Why did you choose your undergraduate major?

What extracurricular activities were you involved in during your undergraduate years?

(Do not say you were too busy studying to get involved. They are looking for well-rounded people, who get high grades while doing other things.)

Tell me a little about yourself.

What books have you read lately? (Other than required textbooks.)

What is your favorite book?

What was your favorite book when you were eleven years old?

What newspapers, magazines, and journals do you read on a regular basis?

What was the last movie you saw?

What is your all-time favorite movie?

What do you do in your spare time?

What are your strong points?

What are your weak points?

What three things would like to change about yourself?

Why should we accept you? (In other words, what is special about you?)

Where do you envision yourself in ten years?

Would you be willing to be a doctor if you were told you would have to work in an area with a shortage of doctors for a few years?

Have you given any thought to what field of medicine you would like to practice?

What qualities do you look for in a physician?

Have you ever been exposed to someone who was really ill?

What do you see as being the downside to the practice of medicine?

If you want to help people, why not become a social worker?

What do you plan on doing if you are not accepted to medical school?

What do you think about [HMO's, malpractice, euthanasia, abortion, fetal research]?

What do you think is the most pressing health issue today?

What do you think is the biggest problem in the world today?

What is your definition of success?

Who in the world do you most admire?

What historical figure do you most admire?

How do you feel about leaving California? (For out-of-state interviews)

Why do you wish to attend this school?

What other schools have you applied to? (Remember: always be upfront and honest)

What is your first choice in schools?

Describe your parents.

How would your friends describe you?

What makes you different from other applicants?

What are your plans if you do not get into medical school?

What was your least favorite class in college?

What do you do to cope with stress?

What else do you feel I should know about you?

(Here is a golden opportunity, but don't say anything that you have already said before)

Do you have any questions about this school, its programs or anything in particular?

(You have to ask a question, and a question that is not available from their catalog or web site.

An example: what one word would students use to describe this school?)