

Teacher's notes

Summaries of the interview content. Figures in parenthesis are the time markers at which this specific area is discussed in the interview.

The sexual health consultant

Tell us a bit about you

Consultant in Sexual Health and HIV also teaches professionalism for University of Liverpool and Chester
Realised that he'd like to do medicine whilst doing a science degree. Applied as a graduate

Why he's a doctor – Likes the science of it but mostly he likes dealing with and helping people

How did he choose his medical school – very little choice in Ireland. Importance of taking any teaching opportunity that you're offered.

Discusses different areas of medicine and his preference for certainty as opposed to the uncertainty of who will come through a GP's door

Key characteristics – empathy, understanding and kindness because of the nature of the work.

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way (05.30)

Most challenging part of work – Not the clinical aspects, well trained, excellent resources and support from colleagues. But political and the resourcing of the health service.

Complaints against you are very hard to cope with. Has made the odd mistake but no one has come to harm. There is always a danger that as a specialist you can miss the obvious (anecdote)

How do you cope with sadness – you get better as time goes on. You can feel sad with a patient but you learn 'professional empathy' which enables you to compartmentalise the sadness. Important not to bring it home. Like minded colleagues are invaluable in helping you to cope. Discussing issues with them is really important. A good home life is important. I play football and that fill your mind. I also use mindfulness techniques

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (11.58)

Best thing is the satisfaction of being able to help someone every day. Treating their physical problem and supporting them in the impact of their situation. I also LOVE teaching.

I'm proudest of being elected the lead of a number of national professional organisations. I was also honoured by our specialist professional body for making an outstanding contribution to this area of medicine

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine (14.12)

What were you like at school – A mediocre student!! I didn't understand how to learn. We learnt largely by rote. I was very quiet and shy and lacked self-esteem. Medicine helped me to change that completely.

Advice – Be sure that medicine is what you want to do. It can be smelly and unpleasant so you need practical experience to know whether you can be empathic and ask yourself 'Does it give me joy?' Try not to worry about things seeming uncertain. They have a way of working out

The GP

Tell us a bit about you

Parents were doctors so initially determined NOT to be a doctor but on looking around at what else there was, realised medicine sounded great. Didn't get the A level grades first time around so resat the year. Didn't really chose medical school, only one medical school offered a place.

Why she's a doctor. I really like people and am interested in them. I also wanted to feel that I was doing was useful. I like the flexibility of General Practice. It was important to me to be able to commit both to a career and family life

Key characteristics in my specialty – You have to be interested in and like people. Resilience is important as is being comfortable making decisions and live with uncertainty

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way (4.26)

Challenging parts – having to keep up to date all the time across a wide range of clinical areas.

Coping strategies – Talking to people is the key. Your colleagues are vitally important. Feeling the sadness that comes from empathy helps you to learn and develop so you're even better with the next situation. Being realistic about what you can achieve and don't over promise

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (7.33)

Every day something happens to make you think "That's why I do the job!" Often it's simple for me to say 'No, it's not cancer' or 'You'll be alright' and that makes such an enormous difference to the person. It can be scary but it keeps you on your toes.

I'm proudest of achieving a work life balance. I could support my dyslexic children but still have a rewarding and demanding job.

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine (09.43)

What were you like at school? Naive and I thought I knew everything, very young for my age.

My advice is never give up. Failure is one of the most important things that can happen to you because you realise what you really want.

The Public Health Doctor

Tell us a bit about you

I was the first person in my family to do medicine. I was in hospital for a while and I was impressed by seeing doctors at work. I was doing science subjects but I didn't have any support from teachers. No one said 'We think you'd be ideal for that'. But I thought I'd follow my heart. Getting in was a real challenge for me. I didn't get the grades I needed and I did consider changing tack but I really wanted to do medicine so I repeated the year. It was the best thing I ever did.

Why he's a doctor – I like people and want to make a contribution to people's lives. You need to want to understand people.

Broad description of options in medicine and reassurance that it doesn't matter if you don't know which branch you'd like to

do. Flexibility of career paths. Discussion of managing epidemics including covid and Ebola

Key characteristics in his specialty Public Health is something you grow into not a first job in medicine. If you feel that rather than treating individuals, you'd prefer to take a more strategic view and try to prevent people getting ill or make sure that the resources of the health service are spent wisely, public health is for you

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way (8.39)

Challenges – Serious outbreaks of infectious disease, maybe three or four children are seriously ill in hospital. The pressure is really on then to determine the cause and get control. It's important to be able to take responsibility but you can grow into it. It's a career that requires lifelong learning

Coping strategies – Keeping up to date so you're confident that you're well prepared. Be willing to learn and be certain that you do your best. Having people at home to talk to is important and for me sports are important too. You have to learn to set limits so work doesn't expand into everything and learn how to switch off.

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (14.18)

Example of changing the minds of people who are covid vaccine hesitant. And the flexibility of vaccinators to enable vaccines to be given in very difficult circumstances. Seeing the joy on the faces of the foreign sailors who come to our clinic is brilliant.

Most memorable day was when I was in a canoe in the Atlantic Ocean going to an island to trace the contacts of someone with Ebola. I also managed to get the money for a health clinical in a very deprived area where people had very poor health. It was widely used and made a big difference. Working in Ethiopia I went to set up a clinic in an area that had never had health care. There were literally hundreds of people waiting for us. Wherever you work, it's a privilege to be able to offer people health care and for them to trust you with their problems.

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine (20.46)

What were you like at school – quiet and studious really but I liked sport even though I wasn't good at them But I was

conscientious and I think that's important both for studying medicine because there's a lot to learn and going forward into work because you're dealing with people's health.

Advice I had doubts about whether I could be a doctor and whether I'd be a good doctor. I would say leave those doubts behind. If you have an ambition go for it!! Think about where you may need help and go and get it. Medicine has been a great career for me.

The pathologist

Tell us a bit about you

No one else in my family is a doctor, my sons haven't gone into medicine either. I was lucky enough to be bright at school and when I worked hard I got the grades. I'm a NW lad so applied to the Northern unis. I chose Manchester because it had a brand-new med school with new facilities and the biggest intake.

Why he's a doctor - I was ill as a child and I saw the role of my GP in guiding me and my parents. I thought that was a really worthwhile job. It was a steady job with a pension too!!

Pathology has a whole range of individual specialities. It's not direct interface with patients all the time but we are part of the ward round on places like ITU everyday 70% of medical diagnoses are confirmed by a pathology test so it's pretty central. We're often described as the doctor's doctor. *Goes on to describe specialities*

In choosing a specialty something that seems exciting for two or three years can be burdensome over a 30yr career.

Key characteristics in his specialty- Being a team player, a good communicator especially with consultant colleagues, an eye for detail because sometimes a junior doctor may not have chosen exactly the right test so we can correct that, organised and persistence

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way (11.42)

Challenging - Workload without a doubt. Junior doctors often need a lot of support in decision making. I also hate e mails! Balancing the demands from different areas. It's very hard when someone who is poorly died if you felt they shouldn't

have. You have to look for the cause and there is a lot of worry that something may have been missed. Even if you can't find it, it does affect you.

Coping - Going home to a happy family life is really important. Interests outside work is important too. I'm keen on sport and keeping fit which, I think is important to your resilience. I love holidays and getting away from it all

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (16.35)

Seeing patients improving was great, especially on ITU. One of the nurses I worked with told me that when her husband was very ill she'd been told that I had been asked to see him and advise on his care, she relaxed and knew it would be ok. That made an enormous impact on me.

I also helped set up a quality control system that meant all labs across the country would work to a similar extremely high standard. But the respect of my colleagues was my proudest achievement.

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine (23.58)

What were you like at school - I did work hard and consistently hard not a crammer. I was lucky that I found studying easy.

Advice - make sure whatever situation you're in, that you've done your best. No shirking. If things don't go right well, you've nothing to reproach yourself with. Come away knowing you've done your best. Be prepared to work hard, there's lots of exams so learn how you work best early on.

The oncoplastic surgeon

Tell us a bit about you

From a family of engineers, only medic. Parents didn't go to college until some years after they'd started work. One of the few at school that wanted to go to uni. Careers questionnaire at college said she should be a hairdresser. Some work experience confirmed medicine was for her. Getting in wasn't too hard, she was getting the grades. Chose medical school based on nightlife but also liked the structure of the curriculum which was patient focussed.

Why she's a doctor - Loves being with people, gets energy from helping people and being a part of their lives. Describes

bond with patients. It's exciting and she gets reward from the challenges. Describes her specialty, management of breast surgery , oncoplastic part is reconstruction of chest wall.

Key characteristics in your specialty - good communicator, a warm personality because establishing trust quickly is so important, confident, good under pressure, able to multi task; team player and leader, lots of energy and passion.

Discusses how she chose this specialty and insight into her decision making also describes a bad experience of a patient dying because patient refused to go to theatre. Describes insight and self knowledge

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way(13.00)

Coping with difficult things - it's difficult. You can be a professional about it but for me it's on the journey home that I process what's happened. If I have a complication, even though that's expected, I'm still self-critical but if the patient has a bad outcome because of their cancer, I can make peace with that because I know I've done my best. You do get upset though. For me family life really helps. Hugs from my small children and husband are important. I also do a lot of exercise and that also clears my mind. At work I'm part of a team so discuss cases with nurses and others on team and learn from it

Onto the things that keep you doing this job

Making a difference to patient's lives. Breast surgery is very disfiguring and being able to change that is very rewarding. The trust that patients place in you is amazing. We are a very close knit team and that's rewarding. Even the scary bits are fun!

Proudest achievement - having children and still managing this career. In work, it would be getting a consultant post in an award-winning hospital. And I won a prize for a presentation once

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine (19.33)

What were you like at school - I worked hard and did get good grades but flitted from group to group, didn't fit in particularly. Quite sporty and liked partying.

Advice. Doctors are just like everyone else really but you do need to be quite a driven individual

Apply to a medical school with the best nightlife. The studying and work will be much the same everywhere so go for the best nightlife

You will have to make sacrifices to be a doctor but it's worth it. And don't worry about the debt, it sorts itself out and gets paid off in the end.

The general and breast surgeon

Tell us a bit about you

Family of lawyers but not too keen, brother was having a great time at med school so thought she might too because she loved science. Main challenge was that had discovered sport so got distracted and only just got the grades but got 'extra points' for being an athlete. Grew up and studied in Mumbai, and came to UK as qualified doctor. Speaks about how son chose medical school.

Why she's a doctor - Because I care. Care about well-being of people. Likes holistic approach that medicine brings.

Talks about being sole female surgeon in training

Key characteristics of a surgeon - honesty, caring, for surgeons, technically able, calm confident but not over-confident. A people person but there are lots on non-patient facing roles in medicine.

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way (8.02)

Challenges - Nothing is 100% but you want everything to go well so when things don't that can be really difficult. Not clinical, sometimes it's the way people work together. Anything that happens in any other job can happen in medicine too. As a junior, I had to break bad news and I don't think it went well but I learnt quickly how to do it

Coping strategies - think about all the operations that have gone well, that keeps the balance. Family life is vital, I'm still very sporty and that helps to keep me balanced

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (11.39)

Seeing the smile on a patient's face or that you've given someone hope. A patient said I'd not only save her life but also her sanity and that meant a lot. And a small boy once made me a plasticine figure because I'd looked after him.

You make great friendships

Proudest achievement: I grew up far away, came here knowing nothing about the NHS and recently was elected President of the Association of Breast surgeons. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from you can make it. I thought that was important for women and for people from overseas who come here

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine

Advice - you need to keep focussed. Have a great time but don't lose focus on where you are going and what you want to do. Only do medicine if you really want to do it, not because someone else wants you to do it. Looking after yourself and family time is just as important as your career.

The General and Upper GI surgeon

Tell us a bit about you

Some doctors in extended family but no one in my immediate family. I went to a school where people had high aspirations which took me along with it.

I chose a medical school based on watching football. I went to Liverpool. I said how wonderful the university was at the interview though.

Why he's a doctor - because I care. I find what we do challenging and I like to test myself against the people I admire and try to see if I can be as good as them.

Key characteristics of a surgeon - Two things Retentive mind because of the detail you need Second, stamina because the training is long and arduous and sometimes you may feel you're not good enough

Let's get the hard stuff first out of the way(05.08)

Clinical side is easy and fulfilling. Managing the system as a consultant is harder. You have to be part of wider solutions that face the hospital

The worst thing is complaints. Even when your colleagues support you it is very hard. It also has an impact at home and you can't underestimate that.

Challenges and how to manage them breaking bad news is very hard and I worked hard to get good at that

Onto the things that keep you doing this job (08.09)

I love being able to make a difference. It's incredible to have people who walk off the street and trust you with their lives. Surgeons are problem solvers. Patients are the most interesting part of it. It's the highs and lows that make it most rewarding.

Now for your advice to someone thinking of applying for medicine(10.15)

What were you like at school – quiet, conscientious and determined to get my grades. Bit of a shock at medical school to realise that you're average, not top of the class anymore

Advice – Stay focussed but never forget the people who care for you and balance your ambitions. You'll have doubts, have confidence in your own abilities but if you have ambitions pursue them but it may not be a straight path but that's fine.