

How To Prepare For The Medical Residency Interview with Sample Questions

THE MEDICAL RESIDENCY INTERVIEW

This section discusses how to prepare for residency interviews and provides helpful tips for interviewing. It will guide your thinking as you attempt to put your best foot forward in these all-important meetings. The single best piece of advice is to be prepared. Read through this section, speak to people who have been through the process, use a resource book, and do your homework. Solid preparation will provide you with added confidence, sharpen your focus, decrease stress, and allow you to relax a little bit.

Practice Interviewing

Practice will make you calmer, more organized, and help you sound better during the real thing - practice with friends, classmates, etc.

MOCK INTERVIEW - Ask a specialty advisor, a faculty member, or the Office of Student Affairs staff to conduct it.

Prepare as if it were a real interview - review your answers to specific questions.

Carry copies of your CV, personal statement and transcripts, your list of questions you wish to have answered, and a note pad with you as you would for your interview (use a nice leather portfolio).

If possible, dress as if it were a real interview (see suggestions below).

Know Yourself

Make a list of your top strengths, goals, values, accomplishments, and abilities to use as a general reference for all interview questions. This will provide your answers for a majority of the questions you are asked.

TOP 5 PLAN - go into every interview with 5 key things you want a program to know about you. What makes you a good candidate? What makes you unique?

Create a checklist of things you want/need in a residency program:

Rank your needs/wants in order of importance to you.

Assign a score to each program immediately after your visits for each of your wants/needs.

At the end, compare your scores, notes, and information from the various programs.

Review your own medical school file before the interview.



Know the Program and Specialty

Know a great deal about the individual residency programs:

Review all the information they send you.

Visit the program's web site.

Ask for an interview schedule ahead of time if it was not included (fax or e-mail).

Ask the program what to expect and what materials to bring for the interview day.

Find out about the faculty, particularly any interviewers (Medline search, web search).

Speak with any graduates in the program or others you might know.

Speak with residents and M4s on interview day for the real story.

Know a great deal about the specialty's culture:

- What do practitioners in the field really do?

- What types of procedures do they perform?

- How are they perceived by other specialists?

- Do they have opportunities for subspecialty training?

- Specialty board exam requirements?

- What do they value or view as important as a specialty?

Looking the Part

Dress should always be conservative, tasteful, neat...and comfortable.

Have the appearance of a successful, mature physician, not a medical student.

MEN should wear a suit, not sport coat or khaki's.

Navy or gray, solid or pinstripe.

White or pale-blue shirt.

Conservative tie: solid, stripes, or small pattern (red or navy)

Keep jewelry to a minimum.

Short hair, preferably no goatees.

WOMEN should wear a suit - skirt or pants are acceptable.

Classic, solid colors: medium to dark gray, medium to dark blue, or black.

Simple white or cream top.

Simple, comfortable shoes.

Keep jewelry to a minimum.

Make-up and perfume work best when they are not noticed.

Be prepared for bad weather - always have an umbrella and overcoat with you.

Create a List of Questions You Want Answered

Based on the needs and wants you outlined for yourself earlier, brainstorm a list of information you wish to find out during your visit. Below is a list of possible questions.

What is the success of graduates: board scores, help finding jobs/fellowships?

What are the clinical, non-clinical, and administrative responsibilities of the residents?

Are there research opportunities?

Status of the program and hospital: Have any house staff left the program? Accreditation?

Quality of current residents? Have any left the program recently?

How are residents evaluated? How often? By whom? How may they give feedback?

Teaching opportunities?

Do you foresee any changes in the next three years?

What makes this program so unique?

Create a list you wish to specifically ask residents, such as:

- What contact will I have with clinical faculty?
- How are the attendings to work with?
- What is the average daily work load for interns? Is it varied?
- How much didactic time is there? Does it have priority?
- What types of clinical experiences will I have?
- What is the work schedule? Call schedule? Time off?

- What is the patient population I will see?
- Are you happy? Was this a good match for you?
- Do the residents socialize as a group?
- Moonlighting opportunities?

Questions Not to Ask

These are topics you should typically not ask about during the interview. Most of this information will be in the packet they send you or covered in an introductory meeting. If not, it is better to contact the institution's Graduate Education office.

- Salary
- Benefits
- Vacation
- Competition
- Maternity leave arrangements

The Questions - What Interviewers May Ask

Make a list of potential questions you may be asked. Practice your answers ahead of time. The following is a list of potential questions that may aid you in your preparation.

- How are you today? (there are NO innocent questions)
- Do you have any questions? (yes...)
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Why are you interested in this specialty? (#1 question asked)
- What other specialties did you consider?
- Why are you interested in our program?
- What are you looking for in a program?
- Where else have you interviewed?
- Why should we choose you? What can you contribute to our program?
- How well do you feel you were trained to start as an intern?
- Describe your learning style.
- Tell me about....item(s) on your CV or transcript, past experience, time off, etc.?
- Can you tell me about this deficiency on your record? (do not discuss if you are not asked)
- What do you see yourself doing in five (ten) years?
- What do you think about...the current and future state of healthcare, this specialty, etc.?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Present an interesting case that you had....as if you were in clinic.
- Tell me about a patient encounter that taught you something.
- What would you do if you knew one of your more senior residents was doing something wrong? (filling out H&P's without doing the evaluations, tying someone's tubes with consent...and other ethical questions.)
- Which types of patients do you work with most effectively? (least effectively?)
- How do you make important decisions?
- If you could no longer be a physician, what career would you choose?

- How do you normally handle conflict? Pressure?
- What to do think about what is happening in...? (non-medical current event questions)
- Teach me something non-medical in five minutes.
- Tell me a joke. (keep it simple and tasteful)
- What if you do not match?
- Can you think of anything else you would like to add? (yes...)

"Illegal" questions might include:

- What are your plans for a family? Are you married? Have children?
- How old are you?
- If we offered you a position today would you accept?

Make sure to:

- Not ramble.
- Listen to the questions asked - make sure you understand what is being asked.
- Answer the question that was asked.
- Not answer a question they did not ask or add too much loosely-related information.
- Be comfortable with pauses, silence - stay poised and confident.
- Sound fresh every time - be prepared to answer the same question 20+ times throughout the entire interview process.
- Smile! – smiling is highly underrated; often forgotten when nervous and tense.
- Consult someone from the specialty about common questions in their interviews.
- Always send a thank you letter or email after an interview.

Taken from <http://www.valuemd.com/physician-employment-licensing/40970-prepare-medical-residency-interview.html> Accessed on September 3, 2013