

## Health Professions & Medical School Interview Strategies

### Interview Format:

The interview format will vary greatly from one school to the next. The interview schedule could consist of one or more of the following:

**One-on-One:** You may meet with a single interviewer for 30-60 minutes, then with the next interviewer.

**Panel Interview:** You may face a group of two to four interviewers. The panel could consist of Admission's Committee members, faculty, health professionals, alumni, and/or current students in the program.

**Multiple Mini Interview (MMI):** This format typically consists of a series of seven to ten stations. At each station, students are given a limited amount of time (e.g. two minutes) to read a prompt, and then a limited amount of time (e.g. six to seven minutes) to respond. The prompts are commonly scenario-based and are generally not complex/not requiring medical knowledge.

**Group Interview:** Some schools interview a small cohort of applicants simultaneously. During a group session, interviewers may present the applicants with a hypothetical problem and require them to work together towards a solution.

**Open File:** Interviewers in an open-file interview have reviewed your file including grades, entrance exam scores, application essays, letters of recommendation, etc.

**Closed File:** In closed-file interviews, the interviewer has either seen nothing in your file or just your personal statement (or an essay in your secondary application). The point of the closed-file interview is to remove any bias that might exist in your file and address how you come across to someone who does not know you. In either case, be very sure you can discuss any and all comments you made in your initial and secondary application essays.

### Preparation:

- Before going into any interview, reread the application and any essays that you transmitted to that program. Also, be prepared to discuss any problems with your application such as a low entrance exam score, some low grades or inconsistent test scores and grades. Know what mistakes you have made and what you have learned from them.
- If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, admit it. Do not try to bluff your way through it. The interviewer does not expect you to know everything about everything. They are primarily trying to gauge your thought process and how you respond under pressure/when faced with an unfamiliar circumstance.
- Tour the campus ahead of time and know exactly where your interview will take place.
- Expect to be nervous. If you are taking the interview seriously you will be somewhat nervous and anxious – that's ALRIGHT. Keep in mind that everyone else is nervous and that the interviewers take that into consideration.
- Make eye contact and do not fidget. It is a good idea to bring a notepad/portfolio, but generally not a good idea to jot down extensive notes.

- Pay attention to the name of the person interviewing you. If you can, use that person's name once or twice during the interview.

### **General Strategies:**

- The interviewer may not have taken the time to go through your file (or may not have had access to your file), so do not say, "Like it says in my application..."
- If you do not understand the question, ask for a clarification. When asked a question that is totally unexpected, many students launch into an answer and quickly begin to ramble. Pause and organize your thoughts before speaking.
- There is a set of questions to which you will want to have an organized, well thought out, logical answer:
  - Why do you want to pursue a career as a (physician/dentist/physical therapist)?
  - Why are you applying to this particular school?
  - Considering the large number of highly qualified and impressive students applying to our program, why should we choose you?
  - Do you have any questions for me? Any questions about our program?
  - What will you do if not admitted this cycle? What is your plan B?
  - What do you see yourself doing in 5, 10 or 15 years?
  - Is there anything that we have not discussed that I should know about you? Is there anything that you would like me to know about you?

### **Questions about you:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your biggest weakness? What is your biggest blunder in life?
- What one word would your friends use to describe you?
- What kind of leadership qualities do you have?
- How do you resolve conflict at work/home/ school?
- What exposure to other cultures have you had?
- Tell me about a time that you made a mistake
- Tell me about a time that you broke a rule

### **Questions about you as an applicant/future healthcare professional:**

- What qualities do you look for in a healthcare provider? Can you provide an example of a (doctor/dentist/pharmacist, etc.) who embodies these ideals? How do they do this?
- Tell me about your grades/MCAT/DAT/PCAT scores. Your scores dropped by \_\_\_ points the second time you took the test. Is there a reason?
- What does it mean to be a professional?
- What excites you about medicine/healthcare in general?
- Do you have any blemishes in your academic record? If so, what are they and why did they occur?

### **Society-related questions:**

- What makes health care so expensive?
- How should society deal with the problem of child abuse?
- What do you feel are the social responsibilities of a healthcare provider?
- How do you feel prepared to meet the diverse needs of a multiethnic, multicultural patient population?
- To what extent do you owe a debt to those less fortunate than yourself? Please explain.

### **Ethics-related/Analytical questions:**

- You are taking a test and notice the person sitting next to you is copying answers off of your paper. What do you do? Why?
- A patient brings you a very expensive present. What would you do? Why?
- Do you think that health care funds should be more focused on the expensive development of new technologies, or on providing adequate care for the masses who aren't insured?
- Do frozen embryos have rights?
- There is a new treatment that could greatly benefit many of your patients. However, it is extremely expensive to provide and you can only offer it to one person. How do you decide which of your patients gets the treatment? What logic did you use to arrive at your decision?

### **Off the wall and miscellaneous questions:**

- You are the editor of Time magazine and it is December. Who's going to be your person of the year and on the cover of Time magazine? Why that person?
- What is a dromedary? What is the difference between a camel and a dromedary?
- Describe with words (not using your hands) how to tie your shoes.
- If you had all the money in the world to put towards resolving an issue with the healthcare system, what problem would you solve? How?