

Medical School Interview Pearls and Pitfalls

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To be invited ...

- On track to complete prerequisites prior to matriculation
- MCAT taken, scores released
- AMCAS application completed, verified
- Secondary application completed
- Transcripts, letters received
- AND...



BCPM GPA + MCAT

BCPM GPA is in a competitive range

EDP: ≥ 3.6 and MCAT $\geq 9-9-9$

RDP: BCPM GPA and MCAT are on a sliding scale

Example: BCPM 3.6

MCAT 23

BCPM 2.6

MCAT 33



Exceptions to “automatic” interview cutoff:

- Post baccalaureate work shows a strong, positive trend in BCPM GPA.
- Graduate BCPM GPA strong, big improvement over undergraduate BCPM.

Pearl: You can overcome sub par undergraduate BCPM GPA with additional academic work—must be substantial amount, challenging, and high performance.



So when you “make the cut”

- What to expect
- What UMC is looking for in an applicant
- Pearls and Pitfalls for interview



Interview invitation

- You will receive e-mail inviting you to interview.
- You will call the AO to schedule interview
 - Morning
 - Afternoon

You will also be invited to lunch with upper classmen, followed by a tour.



Interview Process

- Committee members and staff will meet you in person
- You will answer questions, tell us more about your preparation, motivation, etc.
- You will have a chance to visit the school and meet some faculty and students



What can you expect?



Interviewers seek to assess

- **Communication, listening and relational skills:** speech; body language; eye contact; the ability to articulate ideas and opinions; clarity of expression; the ability to listen; ability to relate personal experiences.
- **Respect for others:** tolerance; the ability to relate to others in a nonjudgmental manner, appreciation for race/culture/gender differences.
- **Motivation for medicine:** the who, what, when, where, and why of an applicant's desire for medicine as a career; alternate career plans.
- **Vision of practice:** community where it may be located, private versus hospital, specialty.
- **Critical thinking/problem solving/decision making:** the ability to analyze a situation, consider the available facts, and derive a logical conclusion.
- **Honesty/integrity:** consistent regard for highest standards of behavior.
- **Maturity:** self-reliance, ability to make decisions and respond to circumstances or environment in an appropriate manner. The ability to control emotions, to find solutions to problems, to have a sense of responsibility; the probability that applicant can live and function away from home.
- **Accountability/reliability:** fulfilling implied contracts, persistence and determination in pursuing goals.
- **Altruism/compassion/empathy:** commitment to service and the ability to draw satisfaction from working with others; placing others' interests above self; kindness, sympathy towards others; social interests.
- **Awareness of ethics/values:** sense of right/wrong; ability to act in the best interest of others; respect others' autonomy, preserve dignity, recognize and avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Excellence:** efforts to exceed ordinary expectations.
- **Setting priorities:** for academic study, MCAT® preparation, achievement of career goals.
- **Self appraisal:** recognize personal strengths/weaknesses; goals and commitment to self-improvement.
- **Coping skills:** ability to overcome adversity.
- **Support system:** supportive relationships with family, spouse or friends

Why is the interview done in person?



Non-cognitive variables

- Communication
(verbal and nonverbal!)
- Respect for others
- Motivation
- Critical thinking
- Honesty/Integrity
- Maturity
- Accountability
- Altruism/compassion/
empathy
- Ethics/Values
- Excellence
- Setting Priorities
- Self Appraisal



Non-verbal communication. . .

Timeliness

Appearance

Body language

Voice, volume

Energy level

Eye contact

Maturity

Professionalism

Attitude



Interview Day P&P

■ DO:

- Show up on time
- Appearance: neat, clean, well-groomed, professional attire
- Wear comfortable shoes!

■ DON'T

- Forget to silence your cell phone!!!

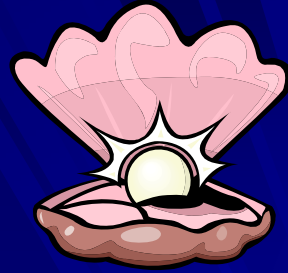


Pitfalls I have seen..

- Very casual clothing
(applicant was uncomfortable—all others in business attire)
- Extremely high-heeled shoes
(Painful feet were a great distraction—this applicant walked in pain!)



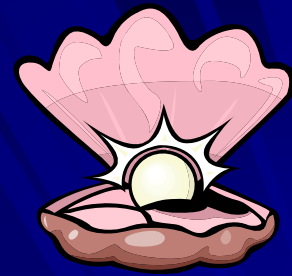
Pearls



- Conservative dress--business attire.
(Look like a professional!)
- Comfortable shoes
- Turn cell phone off or leave it in the car!
- Neatly groomed.
- Arrive at the expected time.



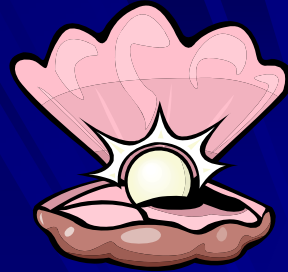
Pearls



- Take a few deep breaths before you come into the AO—and RELAX!!!
- Be yourself.
- If “being yourself” means you are too intimidated to speak, you might not be ready for medical school.



Pearls



■ Pay attention to your speaking volume.

- Speak up, speak clearly but don't BLAST people out of the room.

- Sufficient volume to appear confident, but not overbearing or arrogant.

- You can practice appropriate volume by this skill with people in their 40's, 50's, 60's, and even 70's and beyond.



Pitfall. . .the Yeller



- LOUD voice, blasted the interviewer.
- Everyone could hear every word through the doors, walls, etc.
- Interviewer thoughts: “Will this person yell at every patient?”



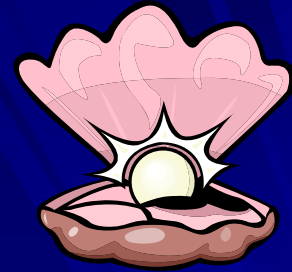
Pitfall...too quiet (AKA “the whisperer”)



- More nervous than average, too quiet to be heard
 - Nerves, jitters
 - Scared to death
- Interviewer thoughts:
 - Is this person strong enough for medical school?
 - Will patients, students, physicians intimidate this person?
 - Is there something to hide?



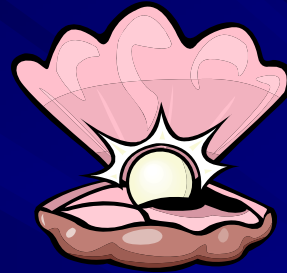
Pearls:



- Applicant who presents well:
 - Makes eye contact
 - Listens, answers questions
 - Does not appear “rehearsed”
 - Does not “talk over” the interviewer
 - Does not “ramble on”
- Interviewer thoughts:
 - He/she is attentive and easy to talk to.
 - Patients will be comfortable with this person.
 - This person seems to be mature and strong



Pearl

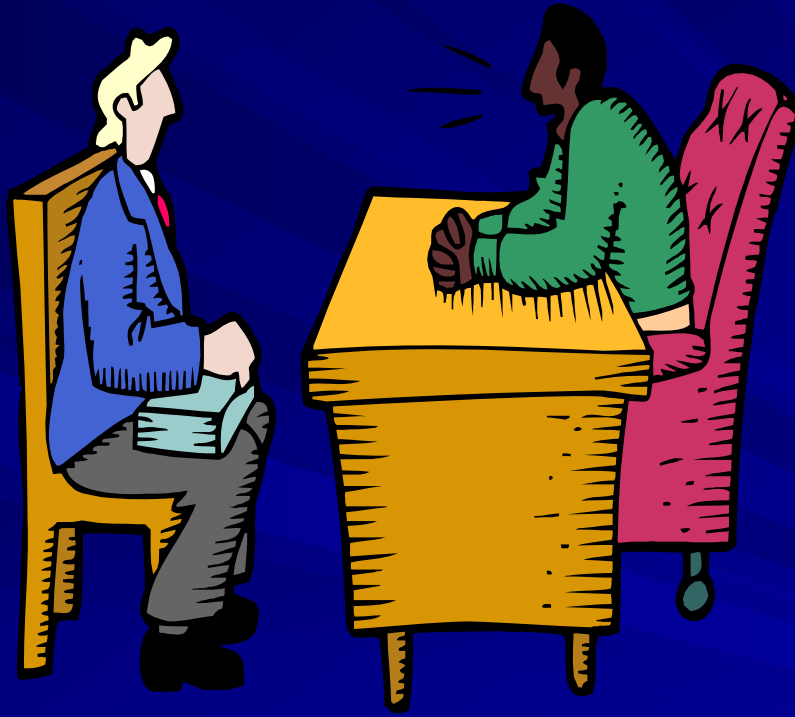


Sit up!











Pitfalls-don't

Slouch down

Wiggle around (ants in the pants!)

Squirm

Avoid eye contact

Stare without blinking!

Twirl hair constantly

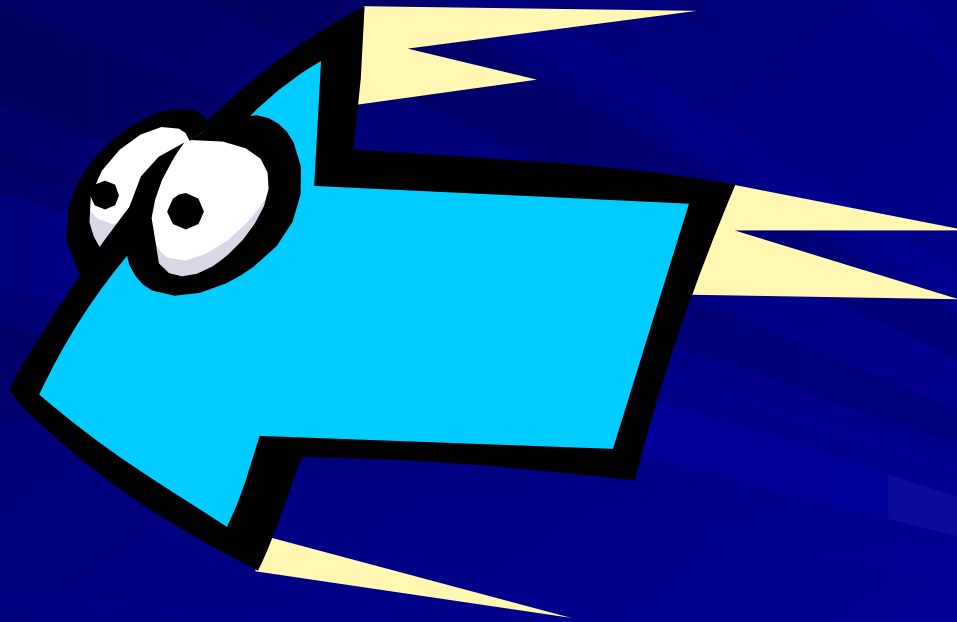
Try to read your file







Always looking away. . .



Common mistakes

Not answering questions

Q: “Tell me about what made you decide to become a doctor.”

A: “Um.....well (long silence)... what?”



Common questions:

- How have you prepared for medical school?
 - Good answer: talk about your undergraduate coursework, health care experience, personal reflection, etc.
 - Bad answer: don't talk about preparation for medical school.



Common question

- “Tell me how you prepared for the MCAT.”
 - Good answer: tell how you prepared for the MCAT. If you are preparing to take it again, tell that too.
 - Bad answer: make excuses why you didn’t prepare for the MCAT, and why you shouldn’t have to.



Common question

- Scenario in which you must choose the right course of action.
 - Good answer: listen, think, choose the right course of action, answer.
 - Bad answer: blurt out response without thinking.



Important!!!
Remember this. . .

It's not about you anymore.

It's about your future patients!



Final thoughts about interview

- The interview is not designed to intimidate you.
- Once you are invited for interview, you have survived the “first cut.”
 - About half of the people who interview will be accepted.
 - Some of the interviewed applicants will become alternates.
 - The number of alternates who will be admitted varies from year to year.



AO staff are your friends!

■ AO office staff

- Coordinate your visit.
- Schedule your interview
- Answer your questions
- Direct you to interview location
- Provide you with a card with names, titles
- Handle everything about your application file

■ AO staff also:

- Make your experience better
- Put you at ease



For more information

<http://som.umc.edu/admissions.html>





The End

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