

Graduate School – Medical School

Physicians and surgeons serve a fundamental role in our society and have an effect on all our lives. They diagnose illnesses and prescribe and administer treatment for people suffering from injury or illness. Physicians examine patients, obtain medical histories, and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests.

People who wish to become physicians must have a desire to serve patients, be self motivated and be able to survive the pressures and long hours of medical education and practice. Physicians, also, must have a good bedside manner, emotional stability, and the ability to make decisions in emergencies. Medicine is a lifetime commitment and you must study constantly to stay up to date on the latest information.

Are you ready for medical school and do you have what it takes to succeed in medicine? Ask yourself if you are truly dedicated to serving the needs of your fellow human beings. You must be sure you answer in the affirmative before you apply to medical school.

To become a physician it takes four years of undergraduate study, four years of medical study and from two to eight years of residency, depending upon the specialty that you choose. In considering the pros and cons of a medical career, you should also bear in mind the long hours involved in completing the residency.

Over 140 institutions offer medical degrees and it will take time and research for you to locate the right program.

Preparation

Schools recognize the importance of a broad education but they seek a strong background in the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics,) solid communications skills, knowledge of computers and strong credentials in the humanities and the social sciences. Get volunteer or work experience in health related fields. This indicates how important the medical field is to the applicant when the medical school applications committee is reviewing applications. Develop relationships with mentors and advisors. Support with undergraduate studies, recommendations of appropriate medical schools, and letters of recommendation, is essential.

Medical College Aptitude Test

Prepare for and take the MCAT. This standardized test is required for admission to the medical schools. It is intended to assist admission committees in their prediction of your future success in medical school. Tests cover four general areas - verbal reasoning, physics, writing ability, and biological sciences. Although the test is offered twice yearly, in April and August, schools prefer that you take the test in the spring approximately eighteen months before you graduate.

AMCAS (American Medical College Application Process)

In recent years the medical school admissions process has been speeded up through an agency known as AMCAS – a centralized application organization. To apply to any of the participating schools all you need to do is fill out one application and send it with one set of your official transcript to AMCAS. They verify your completed application, duplicate it and the transcript, and send them to the schools of your choice for a small fee.

Applying to Medical Schools

Most medical school applicants apply to an average of ten to twelve schools. The question to be considered is: To which medical schools should you apply?

1. Do you prefer a small or large school?
2. Do you prefer classes in which lectures are stressed or smaller classes where more personal contact between students and instructor is nurtured?
3. Are you interested in research, in clinical practice or teaching medicine?
4. Where do you want to practice and what kind of medicine do you wish to pursue?
5. What are your needs for financial assistance?

Your application includes all of your scores, transcripts, personal statement and letters of recommendation. Make copies of all forms and keep them for your records.

Transcripts

Request transcripts from all undergraduate schools you have attended to verify accuracy. Once you have reviewed the transcripts have the schools send a single copy to AMCAS.

Personal Statement

- List specific points you wish to make.
- Develop each topic fully with a complete paragraph
- Present each point concisely.
- Check for grammar and punctuation errors
- Have it proofread by someone else

Letters of Recommendation

Most schools require three to five letters of recommendation. Nurture relationships with future references early in your college career and consider only those who have already demonstrated concrete support for you through grades or other forms of recognition.

Researching Universities

- Request catalogs
- Visit universities websites
- Investigate the following:
 - Policies toward state residents
 - Student/faculty ratio
 - Curriculum
 - Teaching method
 - School’s reputation
 - Patient contact
 - Geographic location
 - Relationship with your undergraduate institution
 - Study services
 - Sources of funds and cost of education
 - Special volunteer/research/leadership activities
 - Ability to place in residency programs

Personal Statement Information

- Biographical sketch (who you are and what makes you unique)
- Your strengths and weaknesses
- Who or what influenced you to study medicine
- Work experience, especially if it relates to medicine
- Your ability to communicate and express yourself effectively
- Research you have done
- Extracurricular activities (student government, campus clubs)
- Volunteer work

Admission Committees

When a medical school receives your application they can ask you to complete a supplemental application for an additional fee, verification of legal residence or visa, and request letters of

What the Committee evaluates

- Motivation
- Ethical standards
- Maturity
- Character
- Independent thinking ability
- Communication skills
- Creativity
- Personality
- Commitment to the practice of medicine

recommendation. Most schools require three to five letters of recommendation. In addition to your performance in the classroom they are interested in your motivation, ethical standards, maturity, character, independent thinking ability, communication skills, creativity, personality and commitment to the practice of medicine. At this point they can grant an interview or reject your application.

Interview

The interview gives the medical school an opportunity to learn more about the applicants and to promote their school and what makes them unique. The goal for the medical school is to select candidates with outstanding intellectual and personal qualities.

At the interview:

- Be prepared to ask and answer questions
- Be on time
- Wear conservative, professional clothing
- Be aware of your body language

Accepted

Congratulations! Call the Admissions Office and write a letter accepting. Inform the people who wrote recommendation letters Contact other schools to tell them of your choice.

Rejected

Find out why you were rejected. Was it your grades, not meeting pre-requisites, inappropriate undergrad curriculum, weak letters, or lack of experience? Reassess your credentials and figure out how you can improve them. Consider applying next year or pursuing other options that require a major in biology, chemistry, etc.

Interview Questions for Medical School

Personal

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you do to relax?
- Why have you decided to pursue medicine as a career?
- What **fields of medicine** are you interested in practicing?
- When did you decide that you wanted to be a doctor?
- What attributes do you have that qualify you for this demanding profession?
- What kind of experiences do you have in the medical field?
- Do you have family members who are physicians?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness? Success/failure?
- Where do you plan to practice?
- What are your goals in medicine?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- What type of teaching style do you prefer?
- If you don't get into medical school, what will you do?
- What did you like about college?
- What is your favorite book? What are you reading now?
- What area of medicine are you interested in?
- Where else have you applied? Why do you want to come here?
- What leadership roles have you assumed?

Ethical

- What are your views on abortion? Euthanasia?
- Do you have an opinion on fetal-tissue research?
- How would you feel about treating a patient infected with HIV?
- If you had the opportunity to develop a cure for cancer or AIDS which would you choose and why?
- Should people be able to sell their own organs?
- Do you agree with Dr. Kevorkian's actions?
- How do feel about treating uninsured or indigent patients?
- What is your opinion on drug legalization?

Hypothetical Situations

- You are treating a terminally ill patient being kept alive on life support. You believe he should be removed from the machinery. What do you do?
- A pregnant teenager comes to you to discuss her problems and she has not told her parents. What do you do?

Health Care Issues

- What is the most difficult issue facing health care today?

- What do you think the role of the government should be in health care?
- Do you think health care is a right or a privilege?
- How do you feel about socialized medicine?
- Do you know what an HMO is? A PPO?

Career Center Resources

Barron's Guide to Medical and Dental Schools, by Saul Wischnitzer, 2000

Getting into Medical School, by Sanford J. Brown, 2006

Health Care Job Explosion, by Dennis V. Damp, 2006

Peterson's Game Plan for Getting into Medical School, by C.S. Jewell, 2000

Peterson's U.S. and Canadian Medical Schools, 1999

Website Repository

For even more information, please search through our hand-picked list of websites on [The Career Center's Website Repository](#).