

# MEDICINE INTERVIEWS

Whilst medical schools vary, most interviews will follow a pattern. Below is a comprehensive range of questions they may ask and the sort of areas they are looking for you to explore and expand on.

You must also keep up to date with medical issues in the health service industry. Useful sources are the Guardian on a Wednesday and the websites: [bmjcareers.com/advicezone](http://bmjcareers.com/advicezone), [bma.org.uk](http://bma.org.uk), [hsj.co.uk](http://hsj.co.uk). The [bbc.news.com](http://bbc.news.com) website is useful because it has a specific section on health and explores issues. I would also recommend going on the radio 4 website and listening to any of their programmes on health (many are on podcasts). Useful books are Learning Medicine: Peter Richards et al and Insiders Guide to Medical Schools: Alex Almoudaris et al. You should also go on a few courses and conferences.

Medical schools run a problem based or non problem based curriculum and you have to decide which is most suited. Given that it doesn't really matter in career terms where you study, you need to also look at the application ratio. Overall around 40% of applicants are offered a place but it varies hugely from Birmingham at 69% to Cambridge at 22%. There are huge regional differences, with Scottish medical schools only offering 22% of English applicants a place compared to 52% of Scottish applications.

The most common reasons for rejection at the written stage (in addition to poor exam results) are lack of work experience, poor reference, lack of demonstrated motivation and a lack of hobbies and interests. Admission tutors also take into account the various written tests with the UKCAT used extensively, the BMAT at a few institutions and the GAMSAT for post graduate applications. The UKCAT covers verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, abstract reasoning, decision analysis and non cognitive analysis. Sample tests for BMAT and UKCAT are on the Internet and tutors advise students not to invest in expensive preparation courses. The interview itself is mainly aimed at looking at 4 broad areas:

**Motivation:** i.e. interest in the career, knowledge of the profession, motivation regarding career choice. **Communication Skills:** i.e. verbal communication skills and interaction & rapport **Professionalism:** i.e. problem solving skills, goal setting & decision making, time management & flexibility, responsibility, values & attitudes and integrity.

**Personality:** i.e. physical appearance including health, speech & poise, warmth & empathy, self confidence (not arrogance) and perseverance.

Common failings at interview are a lack of knowledge on the wider aspects of health, lack of knowledge on current events/policy regarding the health sector and the inability to answer questions on ethical issues. In addition many students are not prepared to answer the obvious question of why do you want to study here. Questions asked at last years UCL & Kings admissions interviews included:

- Why do you want to study medicine?
- Life expectancy and longevity are rising. What are the implications of this?
- Tell me what you learned from your work experience
- How would you handle the stresses of being a doctor?
- What are the most significant aspects of communication?
- What are the issues surrounding the NHS?

- What difficulties and stresses are posed for GPs?
- What recent medical news have you recently come across?
- If you were made in charge of the NHS budget, where would you allocate your funds?
- Recently there has been a rise in the cases of measles. Do you know why?
- What sort of diseases mentioned alongside stem cell research?
- What body system does cystic fibrosis affect the most?
- What method can be used for gene therapy?

## OTHER POTENTIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### COURSE RESEARCH:

- What interests you about our curriculum?
- Why have you chosen our medical school and how does the course suit you?
- What do you know about problem based learning and what are its benefits/disadvantages?
- What are the benefits/disadvantages of coming to a new medical school?
- How have you managed independent study?
- What previous experience do you have of small group learning?

### MOTIVATION

- Why do you want to be a doctor?
- How do you think your friends/teachers/future patients would describe you?
- What have you read or experienced in regards to medicine?
- Why do you think you have the ability to do the course and be a doctor?
- What do you think the role of a doctor involves apart from treating patients?
- What branch of medicine would interest you? Why?
- When you think about being a doctor, what do you most/least look forward to?
- What impact would you hope to make in medicine?
- If you were interviewing for medicine what questions would you ask and why?
- Why do you want to study medicine as opposed to any other health or caring profession?
- Why do you think people drop out of medicine courses?
- Tell me about any life experience you have had that may help/hinder you in a medicine career?

## DEPTH & BREADTH

- Tell me about a significant recent advance in medicine/science and why has it interested you?
- What do you think are the most important medical advances in the last 50/100 years?
- Tell me about any significant medical story in the media?
- Tell me something in the history of medicine that interests you?
- Have you seen a film/read a book lately that made you think? Why did it have an effect on you?
- Tell me about someone who has been a major influence on your life and why?
- What do you think was the greatest public health advance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- Can you describe an interesting place you have been to and why was it interesting to you?
- Is space research worthwhile? If yes why, if no what else would you have spent the money on?
- Tell me about a non academic project you were involved with
- How have developments in IT influenced medicine and what are the major future influences?

## TEAM WORK

- Tell me about a team you were in and what was your contribution?
- Tell me about a situation where you have used your communication skills to solve a team problem
- Tell me about a group activity you have organised
- What do you think makes a successful team?
- As a doctor who will be the most important members in your team?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being in a team?
- What are your views on nurses playing a much greater role in medical services and doing work formally undertaken by doctors?
- What are the advantages of nurses being the first contact in primary care?

## PERSONAL INSIGHT

- What ways of study/work have you developed **and** how will they help with **medical** school?
- How do you cope with criticism?
- Give an example of something you held a strong opinion on but changed your mind. Why did you change your mind and what was the process?
- If with hindsight you realise you did/said something wrong what did/would you do about it?
- What do you think are the main issues/problems for doctors in keeping up to date with information over a long medical career?

- Tell me about your outside interests and hobbies and will you keep them up at medical school?
- Tell me 2 personal qualities you have that will help you be a good doctor
- Tell me 2 personal shortcomings you have that you think you will have to overcome to be a good doctor
- Medical training is long and the job is stressful, why do you think you would stick it out?
- What do you think will be the most difficult things you will have to cope with in the training?
- What relevance are non science A levels for medicine?
- What skills are needed to communicate with patients? And how would you acquire them?
- What challenges will being a doctor present to you?
- What are the negative aspects to you of being a doctor?
- What do you think are the main attributes needed to be a good doctor? Do you have them and how would you acquire them?
- Tell me about an interesting experience you have had and what did you learn about yourself?
- Tell me just one thing about yourself to help me get a sense of you
- If you could change just 2 things about yourself what would they be and why would you change them?
- What qualities do you have that others value in you?
- How would other people describe you?

## UNDERSTANDING OF MEDICINE IN SOCIETY

- How do politics influence health care? Is this inevitable?
- Why are doctors and the NHS in the media so much?
- How can doctors promote good health apart from treating illness?
- Do you think doctors and the NHS get bad media coverage? If yes why Where do you see the NHS going?
- What are the arguments for/against non essential surgery on the NHS?
- What are the government priorities in health care? Do you agree with them?
- How should the NHS balance promoting good health and treating illness?
- How has the doctor's role changed in the last 50 years?
- Should treatments be limited by NHS budgets? Or do all patients have a right to new therapies at any cost?
- What does 'Inequalities in health' mean to you?
- Should medicine be more about changing behaviour to prevent disease or treating disease?
- What is the purpose of the Health Service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- What are the chief difficulties facing doctors?

- Why do people in the North of England on average live 5 years less than people in the South?
- Should the government intervene to try and alter this?
- What are the arguments for/against paying for your own health care when you need it?
- What is holistic medicine and is it within the NHS remit?
- Is the media portrayal of doctors accurate? In what way does it influence the public's view of doctors?
- Does the bulk of medical treatment take place in hospitals or the community?
- What is the greatest threat to the UK population's health?
- You are head of an institute that can pay for either: a new treatment for giving artificial hearts to babies in need or a new form of hip replacement for the elderly. In both cases the outcomes are successful and no more treatment is needed. The costs are also the same. How would you choose between them?
- Animals that suffer and cannot be cured are put down. Should this option also exist for humans?
- Which would achieve the greater benefit an increase in nurses or doctors?
- What are the arguments for and against banning tobacco?
- Around 60% of medical students are women, should a quota be introduced to increase the number of men? What are the consequences of having more female than male doctors?
- What issues do doctors have to consider in deciding to turn off life support systems?
- Doctors work with people from all different cultures and backgrounds. Tell me about your experience of a multi cultural environment.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

- What experience have you had of the world of medicine and what did you learn from it?
- What aspects of your work experience have been most challenging and what skills have you learned from them that you can apply?
- Give an example of how you coped with conflict from a friend or colleague and your strategies?
- From your experience of health care how would you organise aspects of it differently?
- What work experience would you recommend to a friend wanting to be a doctor and why?
- How would you define success in life and how important is the work/life balance?
- Have you ever visited anyone in hospital? If yes is there anything you would want to change about the hospital?
- What are the key things you have learned from your work experience?
- Tell me about a project or work experience you organised and how you went about it
- What may be the advantages or disadvantages of someone with a major disability being a doctor (e.g. Blind)?

## TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

- Is it better to give health care or aid to developing countries?
  - What are your views on Medicine Sans Frontiers?
  - What are the major concerns for people with long term health problems e.g. breathing?
  - Why cannot we guarantee the outcome of surgery?
  - Should alternative or complimentary medicine be funded by the NHS?
  - How should we treat self harm, smoking or alcohol abuse patients?
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- Female infertility treatment is expensive and has a low success rate especially with smokers and people who are obese. Should it still be offered on the NHS? If yes should we choose who to offer it to?
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- Should Viagra only be available to certain groups of men?
  - What are your views on vivisection?
  - How do you respond to beggars?
  - You have 1 liver and 2 patient's. A) Is an ex alcoholic mother with 2 dependent children B) Is a 13 year old boy with a liver abnormality. How would you choose who to operate on?