

Residency Interview Skills

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Learning outcomes

Following this seminar, you should be able to:

- Identify how to prepare for your interview and how your residency interview differs from the med school interviews.
- Anticipate potential questions and have appropriate responses in mind.
- Understand the importance of the interview stage and identify key elements you need to work on in order to be successful.



Interviewers perspective

To determine:

- If you can fill a “gap” they have in meeting their research, clinical, education or administrative goals
- That you will be dedicated to their hospital, their patients, and their community
- If “what they see, is what they get”
- If you will be a good fit with their team of doctors, nurses, support staff, directors, etc...by looking at your soft skills:
 - Communication
 - Analytical thinking
 - Ability to judge
 - Hard working
 - Initiative, adaptable, accountable
 - Willingness to learn



Your perspective

To determine:

- Whether you want to fill their “gap”
- If their program and hospital represents a good fit with your career aspirations
- If you want to live in that region
- To demonstrate your effective two-way communication skills



Preparing

- Know yourself: skills, career target
- Know who they are: hospital reputation (pros & cons), specialty, research publications, city dynamics, etc.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Know how to deal with stress
- Prepare intelligent questions that reflect strong interest in the hospital such as: scheduling, patient ratios, future plans for the hospital, direction of their specialty or department, equipment, etc..
- Anticipate questions they may pose and prepare suitable responses



Anticipating questions

- Develop a bank of “stories” to distinguish you from others
- Your examples / stories should derive from your experiences with patients, residents, nurses, doctors, etc.
- Draw upon your research and administrative experiences (this could come from your academic life and also your paid jobs, volunteer work and extra-curricular activities)
- Questions could be categorized as chit-chat, behavioral, situational, medical, or opinion based.



Sample questions

- How did you like your rotations? Talk about both the positive and the negative.
- What led you to this specialty?
- What do you know about us? Our hospital?
- What challenges would you face in coming here?
- Are there any problems associated with this specialty area?
- What areas of weakness do you recognize in yourself? How are you improving?
- What was your biggest clinical mistake?
- Which types of patients do you have difficulty dealing with?



More sample questions

- What will be your deciding factor(s) in choosing a residency program?
- Was your performance ever criticized? Why? How did you handle it?
- Would you have any difficulty working in this predominantly “catholic” / “jewish” hospital?
- What would you do if there was a strike?
- Describe a time when you experienced conflict with a supervisor?
- Give us your best example of when you demonstrated your leadership capabilities in a medical milieu?
- How would you explain your low grads? Leaves of absences? Poor clinical narratives?



Potentially difficult questions

- Where else did you apply?
- Is this program your first choice? How would you rank us?
- Situation: an error in surgery occurs and the staff tries to force you not to dictate the error – what do you do?
- Example of something you didn't make the deadline for.
- In depth clinical / knowledge based questions.



Delivering

- Be natural
- Talk in medical / scientific terms, not in personal terms
- Be brief and to the point; but do not be negative
- Be politically correct and confident
- Focus on: -what you say (content)
 - how you say it (volume, tone, silences)
 - physical appearance (clothing, accessories)
 - body language (non-verbal communication)



Final tips

- Be genuine and be true to yourself
- Portray your passion
- Know it is the right place for you
- Their final decision is a judgement call based on many factors

Do not forget to schedule your mock interview next year at your career center.

