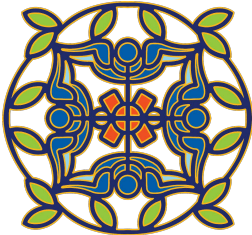
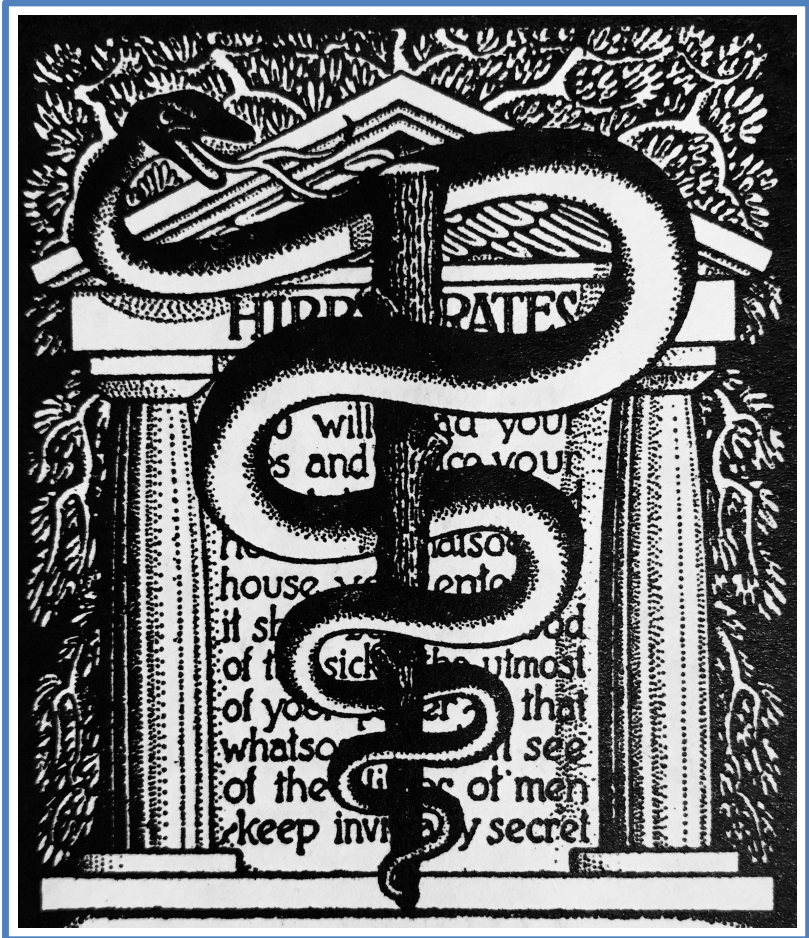


# UTRGV SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## RESIDENCY INTERVIEW GUIDE

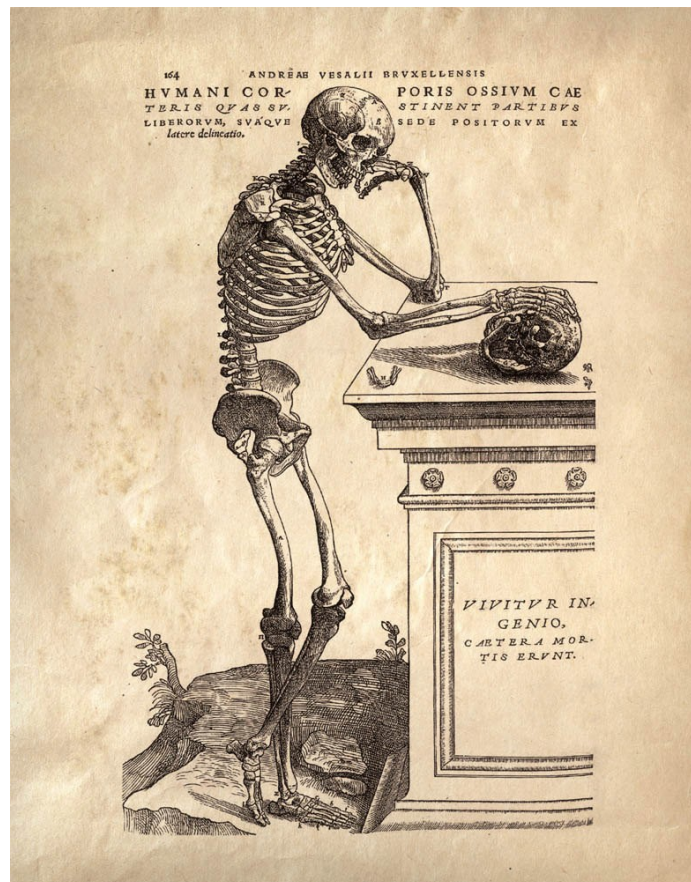


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# Table of Contents

Prepping for Your Interviews	Page 3
The Real Questions Behind Three Challenging Interview Questions and How to Answer Them	Page 5
Challenging Topics and Questions	Page 7
Be an Interview All-Star	Page 9
Frequently Asked Interview Questions	Page 12
Don't Forget to Ask: Advice from Residents on What to Ask During the Residency Interview	Page 14
Interview Advice from Medical Students	Page 17
Residency Program Evaluation Guide	Page 19
Questions for.... Literally Everyone	Page 21



# Prepping for your interviews

## Careers in Medicine

So you're about to head off on your first interview. A little nervous? Not to worry, we're here to help! The keys to successfully navigating the interview trail and nailing each interview are preparation and flexibility. The first impression programs receive, how you answer common questions, and the questions you ask your interviewers will impact the outcome of this opportunity.

Remember some of the personal and professional traits they are looking for: Enthusiasm, motivation, initiative, communication skills, chemistry, energy, determination, confidence, humility, reliability, honesty, integrity, pride, dedication, analytical skills, and listening skills

### Know your background

Programs can perceive you negatively if you're unable to speak confidently about your attributes and experiences. So before you hit the interview trail, take time to recall and reflect.

**Review several times any materials you've submitted to the program:** your residency application/CV, personal statement, and any correspondence. Anything in those documents is fair game in the interview, so be prepared to discuss it all:

- ✓ clinical experiences at your most recent and relevant rotations,
- ✓ academic work,
- ✓ research you participated in, and
- ✓ any other educational, clerkship, work, and other activities that might highlight your skills and experience.

**List your strengths, values, accomplishments, and abilities.** This list will offer the answers for many of the questions interviewers ask, such as "Why should we want you as a resident in our program?" and "What makes you stand out from other candidates?"

**Identify the five key aspects of yourself you want the program to know.** Tell interviewers what makes you a good candidate, what makes you unique.

### Research your chosen specialty

Clue in and remain current regarding the hot topics and trends of your chosen specialty by perusing [journals](#) and [specialty association Web sites or newsletters](#). Interviewers may ask questions about your opinion on major issues facing the specialty, and it helps to have some insight into your future profession.

## Research each program

Research the program so you can thoroughly discuss its attributes and needs as well as how you would address those needs. Read printed materials, visit Web sites, and talk to any of your contacts and fellow students who might have a connection to the program or supporting institution.

Learn who is interviewing you as well as the major characteristics, mission, and direction of the residency program. Be prepared to illustrate how you fit into this system.

Avoid asking rudimentary questions, the answers to which you can find in the program's written information or on their Web site. It conveys you couldn't be bothered to read even the basic information about the program.

## Prepare answers to common questions

Interviewers ask common questions during residency interviews, including

- Why did you choose this specialty?
- Why did you apply to this program? at this location?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What you are looking for in a program?
- What is an interesting case you participated in? What are your career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? ten years?

Prepare your response to each of these [frequently asked interview questions](#). If you can answer most of the questions on this list effectively, you should be well prepared. Answers should be brief, succinct, non-defensive, and factual — never fabricate or overstate information. Respond consistently from question to question and interviewer to interviewer.

A common obstacle for many students is how to answer one of the most common questions: Tell me about yourself. Students caught off guard by this question tend to ramble or sound disorganized. Prepare an answer about one minute in length that is focused on medically- and specialty-related anecdotes as well as lets your personality shine.

## Prepare for difficult questions

Students often trip up when they haven't prepared for the more challenging or difficult questions. How you answer these questions can leave a quite positive — or negative — impression on the program interviewers. Several of these questions require you reflect on your work style and patient experience.

# The real questions behind three challenging interview questions and how to answer them

Careers in Medicine, AAMC

Preparing and practicing your responses to interview questions is key to interviewing success. Several questions often asked by interviewers trip up applicants who haven't prepared for them. How you answer these questions can leave a quite positive — or negative — impression on the program interviewers. Here's advice for answering these questions effectively so you can maximize your chance for success.

**What is your greatest strength? weakness?** Interviewers ask this in nearly all interviews — internship, residency, and otherwise.

When interviewers ask this question, they're not really interested in a list of the things you do well and don't. They're more interested in knowing how well you know yourself — how accurately you can assess your own abilities.

Asking about strengths and weaknesses is sort of a silly question, assuming the normal interview situation, where the interviewers are not personally knowledgeable about your abilities. You could tell them almost anything, and they'd have no way of knowing what was true. So what you say is not as important as how you say it.

To successfully convey a strength, discuss something you do well and provide a concrete example that clearly displays that attribute. If the example you relate is also listed on your CV or in your personal statement, it lends greater credence to your answer. Your interviewer will learn how you ascribe worth and value. It's, in a sense, an evidence-based way of identifying your strengths.

To successfully convey a weakness, first know that you should certainly have at least one. No one is comfortable with a person who can identify no weakness in themselves.

But don't just pick any weakness you might have. Identify a personal issue with which you've struggled and with which you've devised a successful strategy for improvement. The important aspect of your answer is what you have done or are doing to improve yourself. Your interviewer will learn how you problem-solve and how you plan to continue the process of learning and growing.

In general, residency programs are attracted to individuals who know who they are,

what they want, and where they're going. Your ability to self-evaluate your strengths and weaknesses is one critical component of this self-knowledge. Especially in this case, know what you're going to say before you're asked the question.

**What are the personal characteristics or traits in people that you dislike or find unattractive?** You likely haven't thought much about this question or had it posed to you this way. However, this issue is an important one in internship selection.

Everybody knows of certain people who annoy them. It's important you can recognize these traits, understand why they bother you, and — most importantly — be capable of working professionally with those individuals who express them.

In medicine, we don't choose our patients. And in internship and residency, you'll certainly see all types. You're expected to provide the same professional care for all patients. Internship applicants who recognize their professional duties are much more attractive than ones who don't.

We're also rarely able to choose our colleagues. Few things in life are more random than the match, and it's conceivable you'll be matched to a program with individuals who exhibit some traits you despise. How will you get along with them? What sort of conflict-resolution skills do you have? A residency program director is attracted to applicants who can do the job pleasantly and professionally, even with individuals they wouldn't necessarily choose as friends.

For example, if you've identified a difficulty working with colleagues who seem to shirk responsibility and fail to complete assigned tasks, consider how you dealt with such individuals (hopefully, successfully) in the past. Then consider that particular person as your intern in a couple of years.

How would you apply your successful coping strategy to manage this new situation? This is not a question easily answered "off-the-cuff." Again, the more prepared you are, the more effective your response to this question will be.

**Can you tell me about a patient you cared for who was particularly memorable?**

Fortunately, this question is much more straightforward — no hidden agenda. The interviewer wants to get a sense of your clinical reasoning skills. While that may feel a bit intimidating, this question can reap you great rewards because the interviewer has shifted the focus from you and your accomplishments to medicine and patient care.

Prepare a patient case within your discipline that you found particularly memorable, challenging, or educational. Present the patient to your interviewer in about 30–45 seconds, relating just the highlights and concluding with why the patient was so memorable or what you learned. You'll impress your interviewer with your ability to succinctly present a patient.

Additionally, since you prepared ahead of time, you will know absolutely everything about the patient's presentation, differential diagnosis, and management plans and can impress the interviewer with your knowledge and clinical acumen. If you're really lucky, you'll be assigned an interviewer who is an expert on the type of patient you're planning to discuss. Your advance

preparation will be impressive, and you'll have a shared experience with your interviewer that will make you a highly memorable candidate.

You'll undoubtedly be asked other questions about your CV, application, and past experiences, which you should be able to answer easily with very little preparation. However, devoting the time to prepare for these three particularly challenging questions will make your interviews more effective. Good luck!

## Challenging topics and questions

You also may be asked difficult questions about your medical school performance, unclear or confusing questions, or questions inappropriate for and illegal in an interview. Your best strategy: anticipate areas of concern and devise a plan to overcome each.

**Your medical school performance.** First, brainstorm a list of possible questions you may be asked. For example, questions about your medical school performance might involve a disappointing grade, a difficult semester, lukewarm clerkship comments, or failing the USMLE Step 1 exam. Then prepare responses (with the help of your advisor) and rehearse those responses in advance.

Especially when answering questions about a challenging time for you, your response should be open and non-defensive and explain how you overcame the challenge and improved your skills, abilities, and knowledge as a result.

**Unclear or confusing questions.** While in the interview, if you're unclear about what the interviewer is asking, request they restate the question. Try to determine what information he or she seeks. Feel free to stop and organize your thoughts — nothing's wrong with

pausing briefly before responding.

**Inappropriate and illegal questions.** Not all interviewers will be skilled at conducting interviews. The law prohibits some types of questions, which you're not obligated to answer. Restrictions exist to prevent employers from unfairly eliminating you from consideration. Most illegal questions fit into one of three broad categories:

- ✓ disabilities and physical skills;
- ✓ race, ethnicity, or creed; and
- ✓ family and relationship issues.

How you handle such questions is a personal decision. First, remember these questions generally are more ignorant than malicious. A fine line exists between questions that are illegal and those that are simply inept, curious, or friendly.

Don't respond to these questions aggressively. Rather, carefully consider whether you want to answer. However, refusing may reduce your opportunity to make a positive impression.

A better option may be to smile, remain pleasant, and answer the question, focusing your comments on the seriousness of your commitment to your training. For example, if a female applicant is asked about her family plans, some version of "I'm pleased with the job I've done thus far balancing my personal and professional life. There shouldn't be a problem with it in the future" should suffice.

## Prepare your own questions

You're interviewing the program as much as they're interviewing you. Almost every interviewer will ask for your questions about the program, so be prepared with many thoughtful ones.

This is your opportunity to show interest in the program as well as to broaden and deepen your knowledge of the program to assess how compatible you are. Every student maintains different priorities and ideas about what they want in a program. You're seeking a program that'll live up to your particular expectations and help meet your professional goals. So carefully consider what questions will help you elicit the information you need to accurately evaluate the program, decide whether you want to attend, and determine how to rank the program in your rank order list.

Under no circumstances should you ask about salary, benefits, vacation, and competition — even though the answers are important to you. This information can



usually be found in the materials the program provides. And, asking such questions during the interview conveys you're more concerned with the fringe benefits rather than the educational experience. For a comprehensive list of appropriate questions, refer to the AAMC's Organization of Resident Representative's brochure [Don't Forget to Ask: Advice from Residents on What to Ask During the Residency Interview](#) (On page 14 of this guide).

Note: Everything you say before, during, and after the interview is on the record. Even when you're speaking informally with residents, be careful what you ask. You absolutely do not want to be remembered for telling housestaff you're looking for "the most cushy program possible."

## Practice interviewing skills

Interviewing is a skill, and practicing can help you improve while alleviating some of the nervousness you'll experience. So practice your response to each of the [frequently asked interview questions](#).

Then ask someone (e.g., roommate, classmate, friend, spouse) to practice with you and provide feedback. Your school may also offer interviewing workshops or mock interview opportunities to help you prepare. Utilize these services.

Once you feel comfortable with and confident in your answers, ask your advisor to facilitate a practice interview with you. Ask him or her to evaluate the content of your answers as well as your poise and confidence level.

Ask if they would likely select you if they were on the interview team. Take this feedback seriously and make any adjustments.

During your fourth year, take advantage of the mock interviews that will be offered through Careers in Medicine.

## Be an interview all-star

Careers in Medicine, AAMC

Interview season is well under way, and few things are more important to successfully matching than your interview performance. In fact, according to the [Results of the NRMP® Program Director Survey](#), the brief hours you spend interviewing will significantly impact whether you'll be ranked by a program. Interpersonal skills, professional attributes exhibited in the interview, and interactions with faculty were cited by program directors

as highest in importance among criteria for ranking applicants. Rated more important than clerkship grades and board scores for ranking applicants, the interview can make or break your candidacy with a program.

So how do you shine during an interview? Assuming you've already learned as much as possible about the program and the people with whom you're interviewing, follow these tips:

**Be cordial and respectful to everyone.** This should go without saying: The whole experience is an interview. Even casual interactions with the department secretary and your initial conversation with the residency coordinator may be considered when you're evaluated for a position.

Residents also provide input about candidates and often serve on selection committees. Opportunities to socialize, meet, and interview with current residents may be more laid-back than interviews with faculty, but don't be tempted to treat residents as peers, or share information and stories you wouldn't otherwise reveal to faculty interviewers.

**Prepare to answer common questions.** "Tell me about yourself" and "Why do you want to go into this specialty?" are [standard interview fare](#). It's more likely you'll impress interviewers if thoughtful, insightful, and concise responses roll off your tongue. And expect to answer some questions multiple times during the interview day. Common interview questions address your plans for the future, why you chose the program, and what you'll bring to the program if selected.

Also prepare to discuss a patient care problem or challenge and how you handled it, and the most interesting case you experienced during your rotations. Some introspection in advance will go a long way, and you'll be well prepared for most questions.

**Don't be distracted by bad interviewers.** You might interview with as many as eight or more people in a program, and their interview styles and skills may differ greatly. Some interviews will be conversational with no grilling involved; others will be formal with questions designed to test your grace under pressure. Regardless of the interviewer's skill, stay focused on the question or topic at hand and try to emphasize the qualifications that will make you an asset to their program.

**Ask thoughtful questions.** Most interviewers will ask if you have any questions for them. This is your opportunity to evaluate the program and its fit with your educational and

professional goals. Don't ask about benefits, salary, time-off, or call schedules. Most answers to these questions will be provided in advance through information packets or the program's Web site. Interviewers will likely view you less favorably if it seems you're only interested in what the program can offer you and you ask questions that already have been answered.

Instead, develop lists of questions to help you assess the program. Learning opportunities, feedback, research, teaching responsibilities, and evaluation are good topics to consider as you start formulating your questions. And ensure you're directing your questions to the appropriate audience (i.e., the program director, faculty member, or resident). Review *Don't Forget to Ask: Advice from Residents on What to Ask During the Residency Interview*, developed by the AAMC's Organization of Resident Representatives, to help frame your questions.

**Present a positive attitude.** Interviewers seek enthusiasm (for your specialty and their program), maturity, professionalism, and team players in their residents. They also prefer residents who communicate and articulate well. Interviewers expect some nervousness, but good preparation can help calm nerves. You'll torpedo your candidacy if you are over confident or cocky or bash other programs or specialties.

**Follow up.** Opinions differ on the necessity of thank-you notes, but personalized, well-written, and timely thanks to your interviewers can only help your candidacy. Thank them for taking time to interview you and highlight the program's strengths that impressed you. For a program with numerous interviewers, a thank-you note to the program director may suffice. There's also debate about format: while hand-written is clearly most impressive, e-mail is also acceptable. Content is more important than format.

If you're less than confident about your interviewing skills, ask if your school offers mock interviews. Use them and similar opportunities to receive feedback and pinpoint your weak areas.

## Frequently asked interview questions

Careers in Medicine, AAMC

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you become a doctor?
3. How would your friends describe you?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
5. Why are you interested in our program?
6. What are you looking for in a program?
7. Why should we choose you?
8. Can you tell me about this deficiency on your record?
9. Why are you interested in this specialty?
10. Tell us about your research experience.
11. If you could not be a physician, what career would you choose?
12. What do you see yourself doing in the future?
13. What leadership roles have you held?
14. What do you do in your spare time?
15. What was your favorite course in medical school?
16. Why did you choose this specialty?
17. What are your goals?
18. Are you interested in academic or in clinical medicine?
19. Do you want to do research?
20. What was the most interesting case that you have been involved in?
21. Do you plan to do a fellowship?
22. What is your most important accomplishment?
23. What motivates you?
24. What will be the toughest aspect of this specialty for you?
25. If you could do medical school over again, what would you change?
26. What do you think you can contribute to this program?
27. Do you see any problems managing a professional and a personal life?
28. Are you prepared for the rigors of residency?
29. How much did lifestyle considerations fit into your choice of specialty?
30. Describe the best/worst attending with whom you have ever worked.
31. What is the greatest sacrifice you have already made to get to where you are?
32. What problems will our specialty face in the next 5-10 years?

33. How would you describe yourself?
34. List three abilities you have that will make you valuable as a resident in this specialty.
35. Describe a particularly satisfying or meaningful experience during your medical training. Why was it meaningful?
36. What is one event you are proudest of in your life?
37. What was the most difficult situation you encountered in medical school?
38. What clinical experiences have you had in this specialty?
39. How well do you take criticism?
40. What questions do you have for me?

## Don't Forget to Ask!

### **(Advice from Residents on what to ask during residency interviews)**

The process of applying and interviewing for a residency position is complicated and can be stressful. This process involves both “selling” yourself to a program, as well as collecting the information that you will need in deciding how to rank the various programs you visit. Programs that you consider will all have unique strengths and weaknesses—some of which may not immediately appear. The following list of questions was created by residents and students from various backgrounds as a guide to assist you in identifying and assessing those strengths and weaknesses. Use this guide in constructing your own more specific questions, and in exploring your own expectations and preferences. Your residency training is an important experience. Identifying the program that is best suited to meet your educational and professional expectations is paramount. Some questions are best answered by other residents in the program, and some questions you will need to ask yourself. Ask the program administrators and residents for specific examples that give a true understanding of the program. Be honest with yourself about how you want your residency experience to be structured. Good luck! And remember, always be yourself.

#### **Education**

- Is there an orientation program for incoming residents?
- Is there a formal didactic curriculum, and what is its structure?
- What are the informal learning opportunities (i.e., bedside rounds, etc.)?
- What programs exist for resident education (e.g., lectures, journal clubs, grand rounds, board review courses,)?
- Is there a feedback structure that allows for the resident to evaluate the program's curriculum?
- Is attendance at regional and national conferences encouraged? Is it funded, and, if so, to what degree?
- What are the required rotations for the first year? Subsequent years?
- Are there any required rotations that take place outside of the city?
- Are there opportunities to do “away” rotations?
- Is there a formal mentoring program for new residents, and do faculty serve as mentors?

#### **Research Opportunities**

- Are research opportunities provided to residents? Is this a required experience?
- Is there a possibility of “protected” time for research?
- How are fellowships handled?

#### **Teaching Responsibilities**

- What teaching responsibilities for medical students are expected of residents?
- If residents have teaching responsibilities, how much time per week is spent with students? Is it “protected”?
- Is there any formal training for residents on how to teach students and other learners effectively, and how to provide feedback?

### **Clinical Duties**

- What is the general call schedule?
- What provisions are made for back-up call or sick-call coverage?
- What type of structure for supervision is in place?
- Do your residents express that there is an appropriate balance between independence and supervision?
- How does the resident's autonomy change as he/she progresses through the program?
- What type of ancillary support is available (phlebotomy, respiratory therapy, social workers, etc.)?
- Does the general volume of clinical responsibility support a balance between service and education?
- Do your residents express they are involved in too much non-educational activity (i.e., "scut work")?

### **Resident Performance**

- How often are residents evaluated?
- What is the structure of the evaluation (forms, face-to-face, etc.)?
- What other forms of feedback does the resident receive (in-training exam, etc.)?
- What support structures are in place for residents in academic need?

### **Program Performance**

- What is the status of the program's accreditation?
- If there were any citations at the last review, what has been done to correct them?
- When is the next Residency Review Committee (RRC) review?
- Are there any plans for changing the program size or structure?
- What is the status of the last Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Institutional Review?
- How solid is the financial status of the sponsoring institution?
- How committed is your institution to resident education and graduate medical education in general? How is this evidenced?
- What percent of your residents complete your program?
- What percent of your graduates pass the specialty boards on their first attempt?
- Where do your graduates go (e.g., fellowship, academics, private practice)?

### **Employment Issues**

- What are the basic resident benefits?
- Is parking a concern for residents at your program?
- Are meals paid for when on call?
- What is your family leave policy?
- Is there reimbursement for educational supplies and books?
- Are moonlighting opportunities available?
- What are the rules for moonlighting?
- How are residents represented at the institution level? How is the resident member of GMEC selected?
- Is there a union? Is membership mandatory? Are there dues?
- Is there a House Officers Association?

### **Questions to specifically ask other Residents**

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- Would you consider the same program if applying again?
- Is there an appropriate balance between service obligations and the educational program?
- Is there enough ancillary support to minimize "scut"?
- What has changed since you came to the program?
- Is the program responsive to suggestions for change?
- How accessible is the faculty?
- Is the relationship with faculty collegial?
- Do the residents get along with one another?
- How do your residents get along with residents in other programs?
- In what activities are you involved outside of the program?
- How does your spouse/significant other like the city/area?

### **Questions to ask Yourself**

Finally, you will likely find yourself facing a decision between one of several programs which are all extremely similar from academic and patient-care standpoints. At this time, it is very important to consider factors relating to your personal happiness and comfort for the duration of your residency.

- Can I be happy working in this program and with these people?
- Am I confident in the program and the sponsoring institution?
- Are there factors that make this place (city/town/rural area) an attractive place for me to live during my residency? (Factors that you may include are proximity to immediate and extended family, happiness of spouse/significant other, housing, cost of living, quality of secondary school system, community opportunities, and recreational activities.)



## Interview Advice from Medical Students

### **Scheduling the Interview**

- ✓ Once you receive an interview invitation, respond immediately. There are some programs that offer more invitations for interviews than they can accommodate. To ensure that you do indeed get a spot, it is important to call or e-mail the coordinator as soon as possible to pick your date.
- ✓ Be polite and courteous to every person you speak with regardless of his or her rank or position in the department. Scheduling can often involve conflicts and be quite difficult at times. Do not lose your temper or appear to be too pushy. You don't want the residency coordinator or secretary to remember you for the wrong reason.
- ✓ If possible, schedule an interview at a program that you are not really interested in for your first interview. Everyone can use a "practice interview" and you don't want this to take place at one of your top programs.
- ✓ Plan for enough time in getting to the interview. You might want to arrive in the city the night before. Remember bad weather can result in travel delays. Don't cut it too close. Also make sure that you plan enough time to focus and gather your thoughts before the interview begins.
- ✓ Plan for an adequate amount of time to spend at the interview. Try to get a feel for the hospital, the kind of people in the program and the city.
- ✓ Schedule programs that you are less likely to go to at the end. Many people end up canceling interviews at the end of the cycle. However, if you decide not to go to an interview, make sure you call and cancel. If possible try to speak to a person instead of leaving a message on voice mail. Whatever you do, don't just blow it off.

### **Preparation of the Interview**

- ✓ Read the brochure or visit the program's website ahead of time. You don't want to ask questions that are clearly explained in the hospital's own materials. Research the program itself. Find out its strengths, areas of focus and key faculty members. Prepare specific questions to ask which will give you greater insight on that particular program.
- ✓ Be prepared to talk about one or two interesting cases you have dealt with on your rotations. Also be prepared to discuss one or two ethical dilemmas.
- ✓ Always go to the dinner the night before if offered. The dinners are often great sources of information and an opportunity to meet some of the residents in the program. Don't order spaghetti! (Travel with an extra shirt or tie in case you

spill something on yourself.)

## **During the Interview**

- ✓ Begin by smiling and greeting the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- ✓ Act interested! It sounds simple, but if you don't make eye contact or ask questions, the interview may get the wrong idea about you.
- ✓ Ask intelligent well-thought-out questions.
- ✓ Try to use as many examples to back up your statements as you can. Giving real life illustrations adds to your credibility and gives the interviewer a better feel for your personality.
- ✓ It's okay to ask some generic questions at each program to see how the answers compare with each other.
- ✓ Present yourself as a team player. Although this process is competitive, be careful not to berate others in order to make yourself look good.
- ✓ Be sincere and honest. Be yourself! Use the interview as an opportunity to learn as much as you can about the program. Remember, you are doing the selecting too.

## **After the Interview**

- ✓ Debrief yourself. Use some sort of note system or evaluation form to provide yourself with important facts and impressions of the program, the people and the hospital community.
- ✓ Whether to send or not to send a thank-you note is your own personal choice. It is wise to let your top choice program know that they are your first choice, however do not send more than one of these letters out. You can also let programs know that you plan to rank them "among your top choices" or "are highly interested."
- ✓ Take any promises which a program director or faculty member makes with a grain of salt. Unfortunately, students have been promised spots in the past and have not gotten them.

## Residency Program Evaluation Guide

Here is a checklist to evaluate the programs in which you are interested. You can then transfer the results to your [advisement portfolio](#) for discussion with your career advisor.

Residency Program Rating Scale: 1=Poor; 2=Fair; 3=Adequate; 4=Good; 5=Excellent.  
On the basis of your needs, rate this residency program's:

Feature	Rating	Comments
<b>Education</b>		
Program philosophy		
Accreditation		
Overall curriculum		
Rotations/electives		
Rounds (educational vs. work)		
Conferences		
No. and variety of patients		
Hospital library		
Resident evaluations		
Board certification of graduates		
<b>Attending Physicians/Teaching Faculty</b>		
No. of full-time vs. part-time		
Research vs. teaching responsibilities		
Clinical vs. teaching skills		
Availability/approachability		
Preceptors in clinic		
Subspecialties represented		
Instruction in pt. counseling/education		
<b>Hospital(s)</b>		
Community or university hospital		
Staff physicians' support of program		
Availability of consultative services		
Other residency programs		
Type(s) of patients		
Hospital staff (nursing, lab, path, etc.)		
<b>Current House Officers</b>		
Number per year		
Medical schools of origin		
Personality		
Dependability		
Honesty		
Cooperativeness/get along together		

Compatibility/can I work with them?		
Feature Rating Comments		
<b>Work Load</b>		
Average # pts./HO* (rotation, clinic)		
Supervision - senior HO, attending staff		
Call schedule		
Rounds		
Teaching/conference responsibility		
"Scut" work		
Time for conferences		
Clinic responsibilities		
<b>Benefits</b>		
Salary		
Professional dues		
Meals		
Insurance (malpractice, health, etc.)		
Vacation		
Paternity/Maternity/sick leave		
Outside conferences/books		
Moonlighting permitted		
<b>Surrounding Community</b>		
Size and type (urban/suburban/rural)		
Geographic location		
Climate and weather		
Environmental quality		
Socioeconomic/ethnic/religious diversity		
Safety (from crime)		
Cost of living (housing/food/utilities)		
Housing (availability and quality)		
Economy (industry/growth/recession)		
Employment opportunities (for significant		
Child care and public school systems		
Culture (music/drama/arts/movies)		
Entertainment-restaurant/area attractions		
Recreation-parks/sport/fitness facilities		
<b>Program Weaknesses:</b>		
<b>Program Strengths:</b>		

# Questions for Everyone

This is an extensive list of questions to keep in mind for those you meet during your interviews. Look through them and note the ones you would most like to ask on the interview trail.

1. List three accomplishments of which you are most proud of and what each accomplishment indicates about you?
2. List three abilities you have that will make you valuable as a resident in this specialty?
3. What clinical experience have you had in this specialty?
4. Do you have any questions?
5. Tell me about yourself?
6. What three adjectives best describe you?
7. What might give me a better picture of you than I can get from your resume?
8. Tell me a story about yourself that best describes you?
9. If you were going to die in 5 minutes, what would you tell someone about yourself?
10. Of which accomplishments are you most proud?
11. Are there any hidden achievements or qualities that you are secretly proud of?
12. How have you changed since high school?
13. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
14. Tell me about your "secret identity" - The part of your personality that you don't share with strangers?
15. Any skeletons in your closet you want to tell me about?
16. How well do you take criticism?
17. What's your pet peeve?
18. If you could change one thing about your personality what would it be?
19. If you could be any cell in the human body, which would you be and why?
20. Do you see yourself as more relaxed/casual/informal or more serious/dedicated/committed?
21. Which is more important, the ability to organize, structure, and prioritize or to be flexible, modify, change and make do as needed?
22. Which is more important, knowledge or imagination?
23. Strangest Halloween costume you ever wore?
24. What do you value in your own life?
25. If you had unlimited money and (x amount of time) what would you do?
26. 3 wishes, what would they be?
27. What kinds of people are your friends?
28. Describe your best friend?
29. How are you similar and dissimilar to your best friend?
30. How would your friends or co-workers describe you?
31. Who are your heroes?
32. What is your favorite movie, book?
33. What is the last book you read?

34. What do success and failure mean to you?
35. What do you do in your spare time?
36. Favorite games/sports? Why?
37. Have you done any volunteer work?
38. How did you choose these outside activities?
39. If you had a completely free day, what would you do?
40. Describe for me your typical day?
41. What is the most bizarre thing you have ever done (in college, high school, etc)?
42. What is the most unusual occurrence in your life in the past (x amount of time)?
43. Which organizations do you belong to?
44. If could not be a physician, what career would you choose?
45. Why choose to be a doctor?
46. How do you make important decisions?
47. Are you a risk taker or safety minded?
48. What made you choose your undergraduate major?
49. How did you select undergraduate college and medical school?
50. What were the major deficiencies in your medical school training?
51. How would you plan to remedy this?
52. If you could begin your schooling again, what would you change?
53. Have you ever dropped a class, why?
54. Have you ever quit or been fired from a job?
55. Biggest failures in life and what have you done to ensure that they won't happen again?
56. Have you always done the best work of which you are capable?
57. Which types of people do you have problems working with?
58. What qualities drive you crazy in colleagues?
59. Describe the best/worst attending with whom you have ever worked?
60. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
61. With which patients do you have trouble dealing?
62. How do you normally handle conflict?
63. How do you respond when you have problems with someone?
64. What do you do if someone senior tells you to do something you know is wrong?
65. With what subject/rotation did you have the most difficulty?
66. Why do you want to go into EM?
67. What would you be willing to sacrifice to become an emergency physician?
68. What is the greatest sacrifice you have already made to get to where you are?
69. If (your specialty) did not exist, what would you do?
70. How much did lifestyle considerations fit into your choice of specialty?
71. Why did you apply to this program?

72. What qualities are you looking for in a program?
73. What interests you most about this program?
74. What have you heard about our program that you don't like?
75. Are you applying here because it is a familiar environment?
76. What will be the toughest aspect of this specialty for you?
77. How will you handle the least interesting or least pleasant parts of this specialty's practice?
78. What qualities are most important in this specialty?
79. What kind of qualities does a person need to be an effective physician?
80. Why should we take you over other applicants?
81. What can you add to our program?
82. What computer experience do you have?
83. Describe your ideal residency program?
84. What is your energy level like?
85. How many hours of sleep do you require each night?
86. How well do you function under pressure?
87. How do you handle stress?
88. Can you handle stress without the resources you are accustomed to relying on?
89. Tell me about the patient from who you learned the most?
90. Most memorable experience in medical school/college?
91. What errors have you made in patient care?
92. Greatest fear about practicing medicine?
93. Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?
94. How do you see the delivery of health care evolving in the 21st century?
95. Is health care a right or a privilege?
96. What problems will our specialty face in the next 5-10 years?
97. What would you do if the house staff had a strike?
98. What do you think of what's happening in middle east? Congress? Economy?
99. Teach me something non-medical in 5 minutes?
100. Where else have you interviewed?
101. What if you don't match?
102. Can you think of anything else you would like to add?
103. How do you deal/cope with failure, give example?
104. What was your favorite course in medical school?
105. Describe a conflict you had with someone and how it was resolved?
106. Describe something that was very difficult in your life, how you dealt with it, and what you learned from it?
107. What needs to be changed in our health care system?
108. How can you do your job more effectively?
109. What is the most pressing problem in medicine today?
110. What is the most rewarding thing you have ever done?
111. Tell me some of your successes?
112. Tell me some of your failures?

113. How do you show your commitment to medicine?
114. Who is the most influential in your life?
115. What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you?
116. What do you do for fun?
117. When did you decide you wanted to be a physician?
118. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
119. What leadership roles have you held?
120. What are the biggest problems in medicine and EM?
121. What do you think of socialized medicine?
122. Do you know how hard residency is?
123. Do you want research to be a part of your career?
124. What is your most important accomplishment?
125. What makes you different from everyone else?
126. What do you expect out of EM?
127. What is your most important lesson learned from childhood?
128. What do you expect will be the hardest part of residency for you?
129. Who in your family are you closest to?
130. What makes you happy?
131. What makes you sad?
132. What makes you unique?
133. Is there anything else not in application that you want to tell me?
134. How do your friends describe you?
135. 3 people you would invite to dinner and why?
136. Describe important relationships you have had with people?
137. Anything else you want to tell me about yourself?
138. What was your most difficult challenge in life?
139. Why do you want to come here?
140. What are some challenges that will face this specialty?
141. What motivates you?
142. Why are you here?



## QUESTIONS FOR RESIDENTS

1. What contact will I have with faculty and how often?
2. What is the faculty ED coverage? (Single, double, triple?)
3. What is the faculty per hour per patient ratio?
4. How often do you want faculty input but find it's unavailable?
5. Who teaches - senior resident, attending, both? Do you feel you have the opportunity to teach as a senior resident?
6. How much didactic time is there? How much time is spent in lectures, seminars, journal clubs?
7. What has higher priority: Attending conference or clinical duties?
8. What are the types of clinical experiences I can expect?
9. Are there struggles between services for procedures?
10. Is it difficult to obtain consults from other services?
11. Are you boarding lots of patients in the ED?
12. Have graduates felt comfortable performing all necessary procedures by the time they graduate?
13. What type of ultrasound and hyperbaric experience is there?
14. Will I have time to read?
15. What type of support staff is available? Who starts IV, blood draws, clerical work, takes patient to x-ray? How often do you wheel patients to X-Ray? What is the call schedule? Is it home call or hospital call?
16. What is the patient population like? (Indigent, insured, HIV, penetrating/blunt trauma?)
17. Do the residents go out as a group? Are the events for all residents or just those in the program?
18. How often do social events occur? Any activities of special interest to residents?
19. Are the majority of residents here married or single, any with kids?
20. Where do people live?
21. Is parking a problem?
22. What if there is a problem, will the program stand up for the resident?
23. How are shifts done? What is their length? Advance from days to evenings to nights? Time off?
24. Are there any away electives? Where?
25. Is there research time? How much and what is required?
26. What are the weaknesses of the program and how are they being improved?
27. What is the one thing you would improve at this program if you could?
28. Are you happy here?

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE FACULTY**

1. What types of non-clinical responsibilities are there? (Research, projects, writing, administrative)
2. What research projects are the faculty and residents currently working on?
3. How is funding obtained?
4. Who gets first authorship?
5. Is there time to do research?
6. If you need to present at a national conference, will the department pay for your way there?
7. Is there training in administrative and legal aspects?
8. Is there hands-on experience dealing with insurance, billing, contracts, hiring?
9. What are the population demographics? (Indigent, insured, etc)
10. Who does airway management and who does it in trauma? Does anesthesia come down? (if applicable to your specialty)
11. Is there conference time? Is it protected time?
12. What is the pediatrics exposure and experience?
13. What is the underlying philosophy of the program? What is the mission statement for the program?
14. Are there any required/provided certifications? (ACLS, ATLS, PALS/APLS)
15. Are there any skills labs?
16. How are procedures recorded and credentialed?

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

1. Where are your graduates? Geographic areas? Academic vs. community?
2. How have your graduates done on the board exam?
3. Did all pass on the first time?
4. How did the residents do on oral exams? (if applicable)
5. How have residents done on in-service exams?
6. Any new faculty coming on? Any leaving?
7. Type of resident evaluations? How often? How is feedback supplied to residents?
8. What changes if any do you anticipate in the program's curriculum? Why?
9. Have any residents left the program? Did they enter the same field elsewhere? Why did they leave?
10. Do you help graduates find jobs? How do you accomplish this - counseling sessions, faculty contacts? Will faculty review job offers with residents?
11. What are the weaknesses of this program and how are they being improved?
12. What are the strengths of this program?
13. I am very interested in your program, what else can I do as an applicant?
14. What can I expect from you as a resident in your program?
15. What do you expect from me as a resident in your program?
16. What are your future plans and how long do you intend to stay here?
17. How are faculty chosen? What are their strengths, weaknesses, interests?
18. What is your accreditation status?
19. Has the program ever been on probation? If so, why?
20. How often are you reviewed by the RRC and when is the next review?
21. Do you support resident involvement in national associations?
22. How many national conferences do residents get to attend and when?
23. Does the program pay dues to (professional organizations)?
24. What processes are in place to deal with issues for residents?
25. What is their policy on maternity/paternity leave?
26. How are the residents treated by the ancillary staff?