

Suggestions for Students Going to a Health Professions Interview

Do Your Homework Before the Interview

1. Describe your desire to enter the medical profession using as many verbs as possible.
2. Cite three key points that make you qualified to be a medical/physical therapy/optometry/etc. student. Don't over generalize, using terms like "I like to work with people." Clearly define points that make you the strongest possible candidate by using statements related to your volunteer or research experience like "I have spent 80 hours in the pediatric ward of a small hospital and have a good idea of the demands of a hospital pediatrician."
3. Note three anecdotes that illustrate your capabilities to enter this profession. Make sure the stories support the three key points cited earlier, describing skills you used to achieve a goal. Describe how you completed a volunteer experience, research project, or anything that demonstrates your skills and achievements.
4. List three questions you would ask the interviewer if you could. These can be general field-related inquiries or related to the school interviewing you, but they must reflect a sincere interest in the profession.
5. Practice, practice, practice. Have someone ask you questions, record your answers, and listen to yourself. Rehearsal, not memorizing answers, will magnify the volume and meaning of words you speak in the interview. You may also schedule a mock interview through Academic and Career Services in you will be video-taped. A staff member in Academic and Career Services will go over the interview tape with you and make suggestions. Other interview tips are available through their office. Academic and Career Services is located in the Memorial Student Affairs Building.

Tips For the Interview

1. Dress so dress isn't an issue! Wear a conservative well pressed suit in solid colors or with a very subtle pattern and polished dress shoes. If you have doubts, err on the side of being too conservative. Again, the Academic and Career Services Office has information on this subject.

Women: Wear a suit or dress with skirt below the knee when sitting and hose with conservative shoes. Slacks, tight skirts, or any skirt above the knee when you are seated will NOT make points for you. Keep jewelry simple; dangling earrings are a distraction. Only wear 1 pair of earrings, no nose/eyebrow/lip rings, etc.

Men: Wear a suit if you have one or a sport coat and slacks with a tie (plain or non flashy pattern) and plain shirt. Wear dress socks that match your outfit and dress shoes. Take out all ear/eyebrow/nose/lip rings. Do not wear rings on fingers except wedding or class ring.

2. Be sure that your hands are clean and your finger nails are well scrubbed and manicured. Give the interviewer a firm hand shake, but don't crush the person's hand (particularly if it is a woman). Do not let the person feel as though you have just handed him/her a dead fish, either. Keep your hands on your lap during the interview.
3. Wait to be seated until invited by the interviewer. Once seated, cross your legs. Try not to pump your foot up and down.
4. Keep eye contact with interviewer. Don't look at your hands, feet or the floor. This may suggest that you lack confidence in yourself.

5. Be careful about your use of language. THINK before you answer. The interviewer wants to hear a well formulated answer to his/her questions. Focus on the question - don't be wordy or talk around it. Don't feel that you have to fill every minute of the interview with talking. You can think in silence.
6. Be wary of repeating words and phrases over and over i.e. "like", "hopefully", "you know", "interestingly enough", etc. "Like I said" is incorrect grammar; use "as I said" if you need to use the phrase.
7. Be honest and straight-forward. Every interviewer hears many students say that they wish to be physicians to "help people." There are many ways to help people - nursing, dentistry, police work, and teaching. What is there about MEDICINE/DENTISTRY/etc. that attracts you? Cite by example and connect your skills to the roles of a physician/dentist/optometrist/etc. Be prepared to tell when you used particular skills to achieve specific goals.
8. Keep energy level and enthusiasm high throughout.
9. Be consistent. Think about earlier responses and rephrase them to elaborate upon information cited. Use examples to support your claims. Don't try to convince the interviewer he or she is "wrong." Provide as much information as you can to support your claim that you can make it in the profession.
10. Do not introduce topics into the conversation unless you are WELL prepared to be questioned further on those subjects. An interviewer may give you rope enough to hang yourself. If you have done a research project, be able to explain the experiment and give results and conclusion and know the difference between the two. Be prepared to answer questions such as those on the handouts available from the Health Science Programs Office and Academic and Career Services.
11. Be knowledgeable about the school interviewing you. What are its strengths? Do they specialize in primary care or not? If possible, know something of the work that has been done by the professors there. If you have an interest in a specialty (e.g. cardiology, primary care) for which they are particularly well known, be prepared to talk about it.
12. Ask questions throughout, not just at the end when invited to do so! A lack of questions is interpreted as a lack of interest in their program.
13. Don't blow your cool with anyone at any time! Remain poised and alert with administrative assistants as well as interviewers. Don't back away from responding to stressful interview questions, but don't be argumentative.