Applying to Medical School as a Post-Doc/Graduate Student

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Applying to medical school is a long, arduous, challenging, and expensive undertaking. This presentation will focus on understanding the process of self assessment, applying to medical school, the preparation necessary, and executing the details.
Challenges of applying as a graduate student

- Working with your home institution
- Undergraduate coursework vs. graduate coursework
- BCPM GPA
- Applying as non-traditional aged
- Letters of recommendation
- Timing—bridge year.
Allopathic (MD) and Osteopathic (DO) Medicine

Don’t Know about DO: Some facts...

- 24% of matriculants to medical school entering 2013 were at DO schools
- 26% of applicants to medical school for entry year 2013 were at DO schools
- There are 30 colleges of osteopathic medicine and branch campuses
Some realities

**Allopathic Medicine**

- 140+ medical schools
- 48,014 applicants (fall 2013)
- 20,055 matriculants
- 54.3% male applicants; 45.7% female applicants
- 24 – average age of beginning med students
- 3.69 – mean total GPA of matriculants
- 3.63 – math/science GPA of matriculants
- 31.3 – mean MCAT of matriculants

**Osteopathic Medicine**

- 30 medical schools at 42 locations in 28 states
- 16,454 applicants (fall 2013)
- 6,135 matriculants
- 53.6% male applicants; 46.4% female applicants
- 20% are in the age range 26-30
- 25 – mean age of matriculants
- 3.52 – mean total GPA of matriculants
- 3.45 – mean math/science GPA of matriculants
- 26.87 – mean MCAT of matriculants
Competencies that are important to success in medical education and physician practice

Capacity for Improvement
Reliability and Dependability
ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO SELF AND OTHERS
Resilience and adaptability
Social Skills
Teamwork
Cultural Competence
Service Orientation
ORAL COMMUNICATION

https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies/
Self-assessment

- Research
- Volunteer/community experience
- Medically-related experience
- Grades and test scores: competitive cumulative and BCPM GPA competitive MCAT scores
- Strong references
- Solid personal statement: “Why do I want to become a physician?”

- Are you realistic?
- Are your “ducks in a row?”
Ask yourself...

• Have you developed meaningful relationships with professors, supervisors, advisors and others who can support you?
• Have you demonstrated a commitment to public service?
• Have you taken on a leadership role or a position of responsibility in an organization or an initiative that has personal meaning for you?
• Have you challenged yourself to seek experiences outside of your comfort zone?
• Are your abilities and achievements in the premedical sciences apparent upon perusal of your transcript?
• How have you diversified your academic interests in a manner that will reflect your intellectual passions?
• Will you be able to convey an understanding of the social, cultural, political factors that impact the delivery of healthcare?
• What have you done when you have been faced by challenges and/or obstacles in life?
- **First week of May:** Applications open
- **First week of June:** Begin submitting applications (apply early!)
- **July:** Begin secondaries; complete them thoroughly, accurately, but quickly (within a few weeks of receiving)
- **September:** Interviews begin
- **October 15:** First acceptances sent by medical schools with rolling admissions
- **October 15 – November 15:** Most medical school deadlines. See aamc.org for all deadlines
- **March:** Most interviews end
- **April 30:** Last date to hold multiple acceptances
- **May – August:** Offers from medical school waitlists
- **August:** Medical school begins
Some medical schools offer acceptances starting mid-October; others wait to notify all candidates in March.

Since most schools operate on a rolling basis, it best to submit applications well before the deadlines—June!

April 30—the last day you can hold multiple acceptances to medical schools; withdraw other applications as soon as you know you are no longer interested in a particular school.
MCAT: issues to consider

• The last MCAT in its current format will be January 2015.
• New MCAT will debut April 2015.
• Issues to consider when deciding which date to choose:
  • Aim to take the test once; not the SAT, no “superscoring.”
  • Are you ready for the January test?
Letters of Recommendation

“Are all of these letters of recommendation from your mother?”
Letters of Recommendation

- Whom should I ask? (choose recommenders carefully)
- How do I ask for a recommendation?
- What materials do I give to the recommender?
  - Resume, personal statement, transcripts, publications (if any).
- What about waiving my right to see a letter?
  - Medical schools prefer applicants to waive their right to see letters; this gives the letters more weight.
- How many are enough recommendations?
- How are my recommendations submitted?
- Don’t forget thank you notes!

Check AMCAS and AAMCOS for instructions on uploading letters of rec

and

contact your undergraduate institution’s Pre-Health or Career Services Office to inquire about services they might offer for handling letters of rec.
Deciding where to apply – slide 1

- Location!
- How many?
- State residency
- Balance across selectivity (reaches, realistics, safeties)
- Cost—see next slide
- Mission and curriculum—see next slide
- Size and composition of student body
- Research vs. clinical emphasis; Special programs
- Prestige (all US medical schools have “prestige”)

**KEY RESOURCES:**
Allopathic: Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)
Osteopathic: College Information Booklet (CIB)
Deciding where to apply – slide 2

- **Cost:**
  - Tuition (including in-state vs. out-of-state)
  - Living Expenses (cost of living)
  - Financial Aid Resources*: need-based or a limited number of merit scholarships

- **Curriculum:**
  - Traditional – Courses Organized by Single Departments
  - Progressive – Integrated Courses Involving Two or More Departments:
    - Example – Organ Systems approach to teaching basic science
  - Format – Lecture or Small Group (Case-Based, Problem Based, Discussion Groups)
  - Clinical Exposure – 3rd and 4th Years of Medical School or Earlier; most schools now offer clinical exposure in the first year

* For further information contact the financial aid offices at individual medical schools and access their websites.
In the Admissions Office -

- File created for application and credentials
- Huge backlog, do not expect a quick notification about decisions

Some Schools Conduct Initial Review -

- Screening of MCAT scores and grades before sending “secondary” applications for students above the threshold; rejection for those below the threshold

Other Schools Send a Secondary to All -

- May include guidelines to help students determine if they are competitive
• Complete and return supplementary applications as soon as possible; aim for a two-week turnaround time. Some schools will have deadlines—read the secondaries carefully!

• Be sure all other required credentials, such as letters of recommendation, are sent to AMCAS or the medical schools, as specified.

• Possible Notification - receipt of application, what is needed, completion of application. Ultimately, you are responsible for all that is needed to complete the application.
After all items are received, one or more screeners fully review each application.

* Some schools may use a screening formula.
* Screening factors:
  * Grades and MCAT Scores
  * Most important factors during initial screening
  * Letters of Recommendation
  * Personal Essay
  * The Quality (vs. Quantity) of Experiences
  * Consideration of parents educational background/occupation(s); economic disadvantage/advantage; ethnic/minority status

The Interview – has the greatest degree of weight at most schools.
Screening 2

- Initial evaluation of metrics and non-academic criteria from AMCAS and secondary application
- Academic review may include verification of completed prerequisites, assessment of level of difficulty of courses and course load, academic honors, and relevant research experience
- Verified grade point averages:

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Supplemental Hours: P/F - Pass: | P/F - Fail: | A/P: | CLEP: | OTHER: |
The medical school interview – slide 1

• The interview invitation: A BIG first hurdle! Your chances of admission greatly increase, confidence builder.

• Promptly schedule/confirm interview date; request change only if absolutely necessary.

• Interview is used for both assessment and recruitment.

• An opportunity to learn about the school’s curriculum, resources, and environment.

• Be courteous to everyone! You are being assessed throughout the interview process.
If invited to stay overnight, GO!

Interview day: usually a tour and lunch with students and/or faculty, and an information session about financial aid.

Meet other applicants as colleagues not competitors.

One or more faculty interviews, possibly a student interview.

A number of schools have a “Multiple Mini Interview” format.
  - Doesn’t predict cognitive performance; measures competencies rather than academics
  - Questions: What would you do OR tell me about the situation?
    http://www.multipleminiinterview.com/

Be prepared to ask questions and learn more about the school; questions also show you have done your homework.
How applicants are assessed at the stage of the interview and beyond

- Social and communication skills
- Clarity and flexibility of thinking
- Evidence of motivation for a career in medicine
- “Isms”: professionalism, humanism, altruism
- Probe depth of activities (e.g. research, volunteerism, other areas that show talent)
- Are you a good “fit” for the school?
Key Considerations:

- April 30- deadline to make a final decision and reduce multiple acceptances to just one school.
- Immediately withdraw applications, interviews, and acceptances from all schools you do not plan to attend.
- Be considerate to medical schools and other applicants, who may be desperately waiting for an acceptance.

Official documents:

- AAMC Recommendations for Medical School and MD-PhD Applicants
- AAMC Recommendations for Medical School and MD-PhD Admission Officers
- https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/recommendations/
Key Resources

Medical School Admission Requirements
https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/

The Costs of Applying

Generic FAQ for MD/PhD Applicants
(University of Penn)
http://www.med.upenn.edu/mstp/applicantfaq.pdf

AMCAS - The American Medical College Application Service
https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/

AACOMAS—for osteopathic schools
https://aacomas.aacom.org/

The Texas Medical & Dental School Application Service (TMDSAS)
http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/
One-Time Pre-med Advisor Consultation Appt. (non-JHU Undergraduate)

- Visit Home Page of Pre-Professional Advising
- Select “Schedule an Appointment”
- Select Ms. Snydman if A-L
- Select Dr. Verrier if M-Z
- Select Session “One-Time, Grad Student, SOM, SPH”
- Select date and complete information for “new user”
Questions?