

Medical Interviews – tips from an experienced interviewer

Are you prepared for your interview? I sit on hundreds of interviews as an independent non clinical panel member and have seen the good and the bad of candidate responses.

Here are my tips from my own experiences having attended many interviews myself over the years and from my experience as a panel member.

- Read the position description and criteria carefully and several times then try to predict what questions the panel might ask. Write out a list of possible questions and answers.
- If you are nervous take a few moments to centre yourself and take a few deep breaths before you go in. Same thing prior to answering a question – there is no rush.
- Dress to impress. No casual clothing. Uniforms scrubs are okay if you're at work when you interview.
- Take your time to think about an answer if you need it
- Sell yourself – You have to convince the panel why you are the one to pick. You could be competing with 50 others for a position. Use 'I' rather than 'we'. Don't pretend there wasn't a team involved, but emphasise your role.

"I am very keen to pursue a career in Emergency Medicine and have found that working in ED was exciting and very rewarding, I love working with teams and the fast paced environment. I have completed 2 terms in ED in my Intern and RMO year, completed ALS, APLS, BASIC and applied to the colleague for a position"

- You can guarantee there will be **at least 1** clinical question so think of a number of typical scenarios relating to the specialty.
- The panel is looking for insight not just someone who can paraphrase a text book. E.g. 19YO girl with abdominal pain. What is your approach to diagnosis and treatment? The panel may be looking for you to mention a particular diagnosis like ectopic pregnancy. Don't overlook the obvious. Remember there will be non clinical people on the panel whose opinion carries as much weight as the clinicians. Don't use acronyms or highly technical terms.
- Create bullet point lists of answers for each question. Don't try to memorise paragraphs
 - E.g. you have post op 46YO Male with chest pain and short of breath. How are you going to manage this patient and what are you concerned about?
 - Repeat back key points of question - 46YO male, post op, chest pain, short of breath
 - Step through the approach to diagnosis and treatment as if you are with the patient, don't leave out the basics
 - Keep your answers to the point, logical and structured as if you are explaining the steps to someone you are helping over the phone

GIVEN MY LACK OF CLINICAL KNOWLEDGE THE BELOW IS OBVIOUSLY NOT A GREAT ANSWER FOR THE ABOVE SCENARIO BUT IT'S TO SHOW YOU A LOGICAL APPROACH TO ANSWERING

EXAMPLE OF BULLET POINT LIST

- Firstly ABCDE
 - Take brief targeted history
 - Perform ECG
 - Initiate immediate management as needed
 - Request bloods
 - Take more detailed history
 - Examine patient
 - Develop differential diagnosis
 - Request scans / specialist investigations
 - Contact consultant
 - Etc
- Use the STAR method to answer questions where the panel asks you to tell them about a time or what would you do if.....This could be anything but if you stick with the STAR method of answering it will give your answer logical structure and nicely wrap up the story.
 - E.g. if you had a question like – “tell us a time when you made a mistake, how you managed it and what you learnt from it”
 - S – SITUATION.** “I had a situation when I was working as.... and I sent the wrong patient for an MRI scan.....”
 - T – TASK.** “As soon as the nurse brought this to my attention I had to sort it out ASAP.... consult with the affected patients”
 - A – ACTION.** “Firstly I spoke with the patient I sent for an MRI and apologised for my error (open disclosure)..... then I ordered another MRI for correct patient..... called consultant and let them know.....put in an IIMs (reporting)....” Etc
 - R – RESULT/REFLECTION –** “From this mistake I have learnt to double check patient name and DOB.....”
 - Use numbers in answers to be more specific. E.g “*I worked at John Hunter or 2 years as.....I have presented 4 papers at international conferences.*”
 - Make sure you have a couple of questions to ask at the end. It shows enthusiasm for the job.
e.g. What is the structure of the team? How much on call would there be? What teaching opportunities are there? What research opportunities are there? Would I be doing many rural placements?

Typical questions

- Why did you apply for this role?
- What skills can you bring to the role?
- What have you done to prepare for the training program? –research, audits, papers, publications, presentations, teaching, exams, relevant experience, etc
- Clinical scenarios
- Tell us a time you had a disagreement with a colleague, how did you manage the situation and what did you learn? STAR
- Time management and prioritising question
- Tell us a time you made a mistake, what happened, how you managed it and what you learnt from it? STAR
- What would you do if a JMO was under performing and making mistakes? Give an example. Use STAR

ABSOLUTELY AVOID SAYING THINGS LIKE: “you know” “I don’t know” “I know everything about....”

DON’T WAFFLE ON WITH ANSWERS. Be specific and to the point. Logical and structured answers that flow and make sense.

This article has very good tips for medical interviews.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5673144/>