

## 5 QUESTION TYPES IN PANEL INTERVIEWS (mostly from Premed 101's [rmorelan](#), mixed with some advice from a friend of mine)

- 1) **Personal** – e.g. “Who are you?” / “Tell me about yourself.”
  - Have a blurb ready, but keep in mind it probably won't be worth all that much because they know you'll have it ready (speeches that are obviously prepared don't grab many marks, so mostly here they just want to break the ice and make sure you aren't a robot))
  - They don't know anything about you, so ensure you have a strong narrative which allows you to showcase examples and experiences.
  - Be very clear about who you are, what are your goals, your strengths and weaknesses, etc.
- 2) **Experiences** – e.g. “Give me an example of when you demonstrated CanMEDs role X”.
  - The interviewers know that you know the CanMEDs roles, so they may not use the exact same name of the role, but when you think about it will be the same thing.
  - You need to show the interviewers that **you are qualified** for a career in medicine
    - Be able to articulate **what you've gained** from your ECs and experiences (volunteering, specific events, work, sports, etc.), and **how you'll use your skills to deal with challenges**.
  - Don't be afraid to be human – talk about your mistakes honestly and reflect on the lessons you learned from them
    - “Time you made a mistake and what you learned?”
    - “Time you worked in a diverse group?”
    - “Time you were a role model”
  - → Provide examples whenever examples aren't specifically asked for
    - e.g. “How would you deal with a conflict in a group?”
      - *“I have actually been confronted with a conflict in a group before, and I dealt with it the following way:”*
  - → Tie whatever you can back to medicine
    - e.g. “When was a time you advocated?”
      - Give your example
      - Explain the importance of patient advocacy in healthcare.
- 3) **Ethical scenario** – e.g. “Here is an ethics scenario - detail both positions and the ethical issues/concepts at play”
  - At least two ethical concepts will be in direct opposition (e.g. autonomy vs social justice). Make a decision, then do what you can minimize harm to all the parties within that decision.
  - The interviewers may change aspects of the scenario after to see how that impacts your decision. Be consistent in your approach and consideration of the ethical factors (not necessarily consistent in your conclusion).

- Use the template that I outlined at the beginning of the ‘Ethics’ document. It works for almost all ethical situations and allows you to be clear, reflective, and thorough.
- 4) **Solutions to healthcare problems** – e.g. “Here is a problem in healthcare – how would you fix it?”
- This type of question may be tailored towards the regional issues that are relevant to the school you’re interviewing at.
- 5) **Situational**
- Interviewers give you a role-playing scenario or bizarre task to try and stress you / freak you out. The key is to *not* freak out.
  - This may be awkward - roll with it.
  - e.g. “What kind of vegetable would you want to be and why?”
  - e.g. “You hit a car and the person is furious with you about it. How do you deal with it?”
  - e.g. “How would you communicate this piece of information to a group? How about individually with a patient?”
  - In these situations, always **emphasize listening and getting the other perspective**.
  - Examples aren’t *really* all that useful, since the entire point is that it will be a novel, stressful situation – the content is completely meaningless, they just want to see that:
    - (a) You don’t fold under pressure (because medicine is a stressful job and you are under pressure all the time)
    - (b) You can display communication skills, empathy, etc.

#### Other advice:

- Be structured and organized
  - I find that I am much better at constructing thoughtful and structured answers to questions on paper than I am on the spot in person. To make sure that I was prepared for the interview, I made several preparation documents with answers to the common questions (which I didn't post to my website, since they of course contain a lot of personal information). For example, I wrote a pre-typed answer for the 'Tell me about yourself' answer, and polished it like an essay. Then, I practiced it several times. Then I made a new version of it that was in bullet points only, and practiced from that one too. From there, I felt confident that in the interview, I'd have a good answer that was not complete memorization and robotic, but that had flow and structure and that I could draw a few nice phrases from it if I wanted to.
  - I suggest you make a similar prep document for all of the 'major' questions, such as “Why do you want to be a doctor?”, and ‘Why not a nurse or a physician

assistant?”, and “What are your greatest strengths that you’ll bring to the field of medicine? How about weaknesses?”

- Be mindful of time, and aware that the interviewers may cut your short or challenge you (be prepared for this and don’t let it throw you off)
- Tie in **examples** from your ECs and life experiences wherever possible, **articulate** what you learned from said example, and **relate back to medicine** whenever possible:
  - Q: “How would you deal with a conflict in a team?”
  - A: “I have actually dealt with conflicts in teams before, [example]. Conflict resolution is an invaluable skill to possess as a healthcare professional because conflicts between colleagues, patients, families, etc. are inevitable, and one must be able to diffuse situations and find resolves in an efficient and fair manner to ensure patient outcomes are not negatively affected”

#### SOME IDEAS FOR ANSWERS TO “WHY \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL OF MEDICINE?”

- After researching the specifics of the school, here are some ideas of things to bring up when it comes to answering the question “Why this school?”
  - **(1) Curriculum**
    - Be specific – *what* about the curriculum appeals to you? What does this school offer that others don’t?
  - **(2) Opportunities in rural medicine**
    - Why is this important? The provision of accessible and high-quality healthcare in rural areas of Canada is a major challenge nationwide. Introducing students to rural/community medicine increases interest in these fields.
  - **(3) Research opportunities**
  - **(4) Residency match rates**
  - **(5) Financial aid**
    - Does the school offer student bursaries or scholarships to help keep student debt low?
  - **(6) Location**

#### SOME IDEAS FOR QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWERS

“Any questions for us?”

- **Collaboration**
  - Effective healthcare requires a multi-disciplinary collaboration of efforts, with a variety of complimentary skills coming together to provide a high-standard of

care. Does your school offer students with opportunities to interact with and learn with members of other healthcare disciplines?

- **Volunteering & Community Service**
  - What opportunities are there in the local area for volunteering or community service? Do medical students typically get involved?
- **ECs & Recreation**
  - Tell me about the extracurricular opportunities. What do medical students do for fun? Are there good athletic/recreational facilities? Does the medical school have sports teams, or often have social events as a class, etc.?
- **Why (city)? Likes/dislikes?**
  - What brought *you* to (city)? What do you like about living/working here, and what don't you like?