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#### INTRODUCTION

Entrance to medical school requires excellent grades, extensive academic preparation, extra-curricular activities, clinical experience, good recommendations, and successful completion of the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). The amount of work is substantial and the hours long. It is a difficult road, but it can be traveled successfully.

The end of the road is admission to a medical school (allopathic or osteopathic) of your choice. Preparation for the application process will begin the first day you make the commitment to enter professional school. For most pre-medical students, this is the first day of college. The road to success will be filled with hard work and a need for dedication and planning. However, the excitement of working towards your goal will drive you each day.

# PRE-MEDICAL CURRICULUM

#### I. CHANCES FOR ACCEPTANCE

Admission to medical school is highly competitive. Each applicant must assess his or her competitiveness relative to the applicant pool. From 1988-96, the applicant pool increased, making it more competitive for admission, but the increase leveled off. For the 1988 entering class, 59.8 percent of the 26,721 candidates who applied matriculated; however, for the 1996 class, 34.5 percent of the 46,968 candidates who applied matriculated. For the 2000 class, 47.3 percent of the 37,092 applicants matriculated. In 2005-2006, 39,109 individuals applied to the 2006 entering class at the 125 allopathic medical schools in the United States. By the fall 2006, 18,441 applicants had been accepted to at least one medical school, and 17,370 had matriculated.

Many factors other than grades and test scores play a role in the admissions decision; however, these two factors are very important in the primary review of the applicant. In 2000, 82.1 percent of those who were admitted and who matriculated had undergraduate grade point averages of 3.26 or above. The majority of students with GPA's below 3.26 achieved relatively high scores on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). Only 3.9 percent of the 2000 accepted applicants had GPA's lower than 3.0. To find out the accepted applicant data for year 2006 applicants check the 2008-2009 Medical School Admission Requirements.

Medical schools consider not only grades and test scores but other factors such as personality, character, place of residence, career plans, motivation and interest in medicine, communication and interpersonal skills, leadership, critical thinking, maturity, integrity, empathy, level of difficulty or course work, and whether the applicant is from a minority and/or disadvantaged group.

In order to increase your chances of acceptance into medical school, there are a number of things you can do:

- You must excel in the basic science curriculum that medical schools require you to take. Remember, you do not need to be a science major; however, you cannot simply "pass" organic chemistry, you must master the subject.
- You must prepare for the **Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).** The preparation begins as soon as you enter the pre-medical program. Passing courses is not a guarantee of a qualifying MCAT score. It is the student's responsibility to be prepared for the test.
- You need to have a good understanding of the medical profession. You can gain
  this experience by doing a formal internship, shadowing physicians, and doing
  volunteer work. Medical schools want students who have had some real contact
  with the medical profession. Many students will ask the medical professionals they
  have worked with for letters of recommendation.
- You need to know why you want to be a physician. Knowing why you wish to pursue a medical career will help you when you complete your applications to medical school and when you interview.

• You need to be a well-rounded individual. You should have a diversity of interests and the ability to communicate effectively. Students need to find a balance between doing well academically and being involved in extracurricular activities.

The medical profession is looking for individuals with diverse educational backgrounds who will be able to bring diversity to the profession. All medical schools will look for students with a broad educational background – a strong foundation in the natural sciences, highly developed communication skills, and a solid background in the humanities and social sciences.

#### II. GRADES

College grades are probably the most important predictor of success in medical school. Most first-year medical students have achieved undergraduate averages of A or B. In 1997-98, only 0.5% of the applicants accepted had grade point averages equal to or less than 2.5. The mean undergraduate grade point average of the first year entering class was 3.56. In recent years, those students with less than a 3.0 who were admitted have either improved their academic performance significantly in their last years of college or demonstrated other characteristics deemed desirable by the medical schools.

When you come right down to it, there is only one way of improving your odds of entering a professional school. **Be an excellent student.** By learning proper study skills, taking the proper classes in the right order, challenging oneself and testing well, a student should do well; however, most students have a problem at some point in their schooling. Before giving up, take some preventative measures.

- A. If studying is difficult for you, discuss your difficulties with your advisor or Associate Dean. They may suggest you contact **the Developmental Studies Department**.
- B. If a specific class is giving you trouble, see your instructor immediately. Explain what specific problems you are encountering and ask for help. If you find you need additional assistance, call **the Developmental Studies Department.** Tutoring or Supplemental Instruction may be available in the course that is problematic for you.
- C. If you are worried about past grades or current grades and how they May affect your chances when applying to a professional school, contact your advisor immediately. He/she will sit down and help plan your schedule to be both realistic and positive. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU MEET WITH YOUR ADVISOR. IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, GET HELP EARLY!!!
- D. Don't be afraid to look at study skill books in the bookstore or library. Improve your study skills any way you can and be on the lookout for additional skills you lack or can improve on.
- E. **DON'T WASTE TIME. BUDGET YOUR MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE WISELY.** The first purchase of every school year should be a daily planner and a monthly reminder which should be posted in plain sight near your work area.

# III. CHOOSING A MAJOR

The selection of an undergraduate major is very important. Students should select a major area of study that is of interest and will provide the foundation of knowledge necessary for the pursuit of several career alternatives. Students should not select a major primarily because they believe it will enhance their chance of acceptance into medical school. Being a science major is not a prerequisite for medical school; students should not major in science only because they believe it will improve their chances of being accepted. Over the past decade 60% of the applicants have reported their major as biological sciences. The remainder of the applicants have indicated a variety of majors including the humanities, mathematics, social sciences, physical sciences, and other health sciences.

Breadth of education is expected. The pursuit of some discipline in depth is encouraged. A successful medical student must be able to acquire, synthesize, apply, and communicate information. These skills can be developed in a number of ways. Studies in the humanities and the behavioral and social sciences, and opportunities for the development of effective writing skills, are strongly suggested.

Science Preparation. The study and practice of medicine is based on modern concepts in biology, chemistry and physics, and an appreciation of the scientific method. Mastery of the basic scientific principles is expected of all entering students. Medical schools generally require successful completion of one academic year of biology and physics and one academic year each of general and organic chemistry. These courses should be academically rigorous and acceptable for students majoring in those areas. All science courses should include adequate laboratory experiences. Many medical schools strongly recommend coursework in mathematics, statistics and computer science.

Premedical students intending to apply college credit earned through Advanced Placement (AP) and College Level Examination Placement (CLEP) to meet premedical requirements should be aware that some medical schools restrict such use of credit. Students should check with the pre-medical advisor concerning this.

Honors courses/programs, independent study, or research is encouraged.

# IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Consult the current MSAR (Medical School Admissions Requirements) for the specific requirements of the schools in which you might be interested. Always include schools in your home state. There are guidebooks and rating schemes that describe and compare the various schools, and most schools have web pages. The table below gives a numerical distribution of the most common entry requirements. Data is for the 2007-2008 entering class.

# SUBJECTS REQUIRED BY 10 OR MORE U.S. MEDICAL SCHOOLS\* (N=125 medical schools) (2007-2008 Entering Class)

PHYSICS	117
INORGANIC CHEMISTRY	116
ORGANIC CHEMISTRY	118
ENGLISH	81
BIOLOGY	80
BIOLOGY/ZOOLOGY	40
CALCULUS	<b>17</b>
COLLEGE MATHEMATICS	34
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE	9
HUMANITIES	14
BIOCHEMISTRY	13

<sup>\*</sup>MSAR 2008-2009

#### V. THE PRE-MEDICAL STUDENT CALENDAR

**A. FRESHMAN YEAR--**Your freshman year will provide you with the opportunity to become a responsible young adult. For many of you, this will be the first time you will be "on your own." In addition to having more freedom, you will be starting an academic program that will demand a considerable commitment of time and energy. If you experience problems, please see your advisor, department chair, or associate dean.

# September-October

Make sure you take a laboratory science this semester. Meet with your academic advisor and arrange a tentative schedule of classes for the next four years. Explore the clubs, sports, and other activities on campus. Join some! Spring registration begins in October. Check the dates and meet with your academic advisor.

#### November-December

Develop a good relationship with all your science professors. Tell them about yourself. Make sure they get to know you on a first name basis. Remember, eventually you will ask some of them for letters of recommendation. Do well in all of your classes.

# January-February

Join AMSA (American Medical Student Association), if you haven't already. This organization provides literature, group support, ideas and many other things this handbook cannot provide.

# March-April

Plan your classes for the next year. Look at how well you have done thus far and plan your schedule accordingly. Think about your summer plans. Fall registration begins in March. Check on your registration date; meet with your advisor.

May - Ease up on extracurricular activities. STUDY FOR FINALS!!

# **Summer Months**

Medical schools have an interest in how students spend their summer months. Paid or volunteer work in a hospital or medical setting will give you some insight in what being a doctor means. Paramedical training will give you skills that provide admission to medical settings, while testing your interest in medical work. In general, you need to find opportunities that will produce relationships on which you can draw when you need letters of recommendation for admission (during your junior year).

Use the summer to review your freshman biology and chemistry. <u>It is never too early</u> to begin preparing for the MCAT.

**B. SOPHOMORE YEAR--**Your sophomore year will be a transition year for you. You have now become familiar with your academic program and the amount of dedication you will need to be successful in the pre-professional programs.

# September-October

Make a good first impression on new professors and laboratory instructors. Continue last year's activities and/or start new ones. Try concentrating on just a few activities. Demonstrate leadership by becoming an officer in one or several of these clubs. Spring registration begins in October. Check the dates and see your advisor.

#### November-December

Read some professional brochures and meet with your advisor. Demonstrate an interest in entering professional school. Over the holidays, try to talk with some recent graduates of the schools you would like to enter.

Explore internship possibilities for the summer with the Internship Coordinator in your department: Dr. Simmons in Biology, or Dr. Villamain in Chemistry.

#### January-February

Stop by the alumni office and get addresses of practicing professionals who are willing to meet with you and give you advice on your future professional career.

#### March-May

Try to obtain a challenging summer research job involving the sciences. Work hard at outside activities so you can obtain a leadership role next year.

Near the end of your sophomore year, after you have an idea of your academic performance for both semesters, you need to meet with your premedical advisor to review your academic record, your extra-curricular activities, and your plans for the third year.

By now several faculty should be familiar in some depth with your academic work. If no faculty members have more than cursory one course awareness of you, you need to address this problem; otherwise, no faculty member will feel comfortable writing a

strong letter of recommendation on your behalf. By the end of the fall semester, you should have a list of faculty and medical professionals who might be able to write in support of your application to medical school.

Remember, medical school admission committees expect timely course completion, virtually free of "withdraws" and other indicators of weak academic discipline. <u>If your record is lacking in this respect, you may be a poor candidate for medical school, and medicine may not be an appropriate career choice for you.</u> Give this serious thought.

# July-August

Meet some practicing professionals in your future career field. Perhaps they will offer you a job or to write a letter of recommendation. Get ready for fall. Plan to get a head start on classes and activities. Remember, If you are Biology Pre-Med, you will have a different advisor for your junior and senior year. Make sure you check on your advisor as soon as you get back to campus.

C. JUNIOR YEAR--The junior year is probably the most important in the academic career of a pre-professional student. During the junior year, many of you will make the decision as to which professional schools you will make application to. Before you make your decision, you should gather as much information as possible. Please make use of the health professional resource room and all other sources of information you can find. This is an excellent time to make contact with professionals in the area in which you are interested and to visit with them. PROGRAMS OFFERED BY AMSA SHOULD BE OF VALUE TO YOU. When you are making decisions about professional school, it is essential that you are realistic about your qualifications and expectations. You should have an alternate career plan in case professional school does not work out.

#### September

Send away to three or four professional schools for applications. Even though these aren't the applications you will be using, it is a good idea to see what the forms look like, and what information you will need. Continue to meet with your advisor. Stop at a bank and find out about loans. Call the Navy, Army or Air Force recruiter for information regarding an "HPSP" (health professional scholarship program) which will cover your entire medical school costs. Begin thinking about your personal statement on why you want to be a physician.

#### October

Consider various specialties in your future profession. Investigate research areas in your field. Since your junior grades are the last ones on your transcript when you apply to professional schools, work extra hard to make those grades outstanding. Spring registration begins in October. Check dates and see your advisor. Begin to think about who you will ask for letters of recommendation.

#### November

Study and take review classes for the upcoming professional examination (MCAT). Get your hands on any and all test review materials. Discuss internships with your advisor.

Go to the Dean's Office to pick up an application packet for your Pre-Med committee interview. Consider which professors you will ask for evaluations, and give them the evaluation form before the semester ends so they have the semester break to complete it.

#### December

Check out as many medical schools as possible. Visit their web sites. Consider size, cost, level of competition, distance from home, allopathic vs. osteopathic, etc. Work on your personal statement over the break.

#### **January**

Meet with your advisor or anyone who has given you good advice. Narrow your choices for applying to professional schools. Look into summer internships for preprofessional employment for your career choice. Keep on top of the committee interview situation. Don't miss the interview! Students in accelerated programs must meet with his/her advisor to make sure all required IUP coursework is completed.

#### February

Continue to study for the spring testing. If any medical school representatives are on campus, attend the meeting, ask questions, and introduce yourself after the meeting.

#### March

Make sure you have met with your advisor and have planned next year's schedule. You should be signed up for your professional committee interview. Double check to make sure you will have your entire course work done for graduation next May. Premedical interviews are usually held in March and April. Make certain all necessary materials are in the Dean's office. Fall registration begins in March. Check dates and see your advisor. Prepare for the committee COMMITTEE INTERVIEW.

#### April

Now is the time to take the MCAT. Work on firming up an internship or finding a professionally-related summer job. Your goal is closer than ever!

#### May

Meet with your professional advisor and discuss the schools to which you want to apply. How are your chances at specific schools? Become familiar with the application process through AMCAS and AACOMAS.

# June/July/August

Complete your applications as early as possible because many medical schools have "rolling admissions". Therefore your chances of acceptance are better early on. The initial application process should be completed no later than the end of July!!!

If you can take time off from your internship or summer job, visit a few medical schools. Look at the campuses, libraries, and facilities where you will be attending class. Ask questions – show interest. Take the MCAT the second time, if necessary.

#### **REMEMBER:** Applications should be completed before you return to campus.

#### D. SENIOR YEAR

This is when you will begin to see that all of your hard work over the past three years is beginning to pay dividends.

#### <u>September</u>

The financial considerations of attending medical school are naturally a concern to students who are applying. Find out about financial aid for your particular professional school. Learn about "partial loan forgiveness" that is available to students who agree to practice primary care medicine at an approved site upon graduation.

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) is an organization that provides \$50,000 tax-free loan forgiveness for 2 years of service at localized sites that are not located in large urban areas ----- they may be rural, or simply underserved (an HPSA, or health profession shortage area). Additional support may be available for those who extend their years of service for another 2 years. The following are some informative URL's about such programs:

http://NHSC.hrsc.gov/loanrepayment http://HPSA.us/faq.html

http://bhpr.hrsa.gov http://HPSAAfind.hrsa.gov/ to find areas by state/county

#### October

Look for scholarships. Send thank you notes to those who have given you advice or written letters of recommendation. Many students who applied for early decision will be asked for interviews and will hear from the professional schools in the next several weeks. Some students will be getting interview invitations and some will be sending applications for the first time. Keep on top of everything. Spring registration begins. Check dates and meet with your advisor. Make sure you have completed or planned all requirements for graduation.

#### November-March

Don't refuse any interviews. Practice for them by yourself or with others and contact AMSA for help. The mock interview offered by Career Services is strongly recommended as preparation.

#### April through August

A professional school can contact you at the last minute to let you know you have been accepted. Students have had 24 hours to get a deposit and start classes. The reason for this is waiting lists. Excellent students who can pick and choose from several schools are notorious for waiting until the last moment to make their decision. When this happens, names on the waiting list get bumped up.

IMPORTANT NOTE: AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE WORD OF AN ACCEPTANCE AND IF YOU WISH TO ACCEPT, SEND A CASHIER'S CHECK, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, TO THE SCHOOL THAT SAME DAY. CALL THE SCHOOL TO MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVED IT THE NEXT DAY. KEEP YOUR POST OFFICE VOUCHER IN CASE A MISTAKE IS MADE. COPY EVERYTHING!!!!!!

# $\rightarrow$ $\rightarrow$ INFORM THE DEAN'S OFFICE OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE!!

#### VII. HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

#### A. READING

This doesn't mean **Field and Stream** and **People Magazine**. It means literature, current news journals, and daily newspapers -- but mainly classic literature. You should attempt to read one classic novel per week or two. Reading comprehension s a part of the professional examinations, and reading can only help your score. Other portions of the examination, for example the writing sample, are aided by daily reading.

Serious pre-professional students should take a trip to the IUP library and look for scientific journals related to his or her field of study. By keeping abreast of one's area, you will feel more at ease discussing career goals with friends, advisors, and admissions committees.

Medical school admission's committees love to ask interview questions concerning current affairs; therefore, keep informed about your field in weekly magazines and newspapers. Topics such as Medicare, socialized medicine, AIDS, and court decisions regarding health care are issues you want to keep up on. Make a folder to hold articles, photographs, and "fun facts" information. Leaf through these occasionally, adding and deleting information as needed, and to refresh your memory about them.

# B. <u>INCENTIVES</u>

Help yourself. Make a big poster that says, "I can become a \_\_\_\_\_." Any self-help device will boost your morale at times when you need it most. Study hard, but reserve a day or period of time just for you. Make sure any activity you reward yourself with is just that, a reward. If you party all the time and do things that don't help you obtain your goal, the odds are you don't have a goal at all.

Discipline must be learned now, not on the first day of professional school.

#### VIII. NOT BEING ACCEPTED --- YOUR NEXT MOVE

Contrary to popular belief, life does go on if you are not accepted to professional school. In fact, there are a number of options available to all students who are not accepted but have an incredible array of courses behind them.

#### A. Reapplying

This is an option if you are fairly confident of: 1. Your grades

- 2. Your outside activities
- 3. Your professional examination scores
- 4. Your recommendations
- 5. Your interview

You should look at your entire application package and determine what single item is the weakest. If nyour community service is not strong, perhaps a year in VISTA or the Peace Corps could strengthen your application. Other options include continuing your education in advanced sciences, working a year in a research center or professional laboratory, or entering a Post-baccalaureate program offered specifically for medical school hopefuls.

#### **B.** Alternatives

Professional schools offer the opportunity for a student to combine science with the desire to help others. Several other careers in science offer the same benefits in various ways:

- 1. Physical Therapy
- 2. Respiratory Therapy
- 3. Physician's Assistant (P.A.)
- 4. Nursing (B.S.N.)
- 5. Nurse Practitioner
- 6. Pharmacy
- 7. Master's Programs

Master of Public Health

Master of Medical Science

Master's degree in related science fields:

(chemistry, pharmacology, physiology, anatomy,

toxicology, clinical microbiology and immunology)

8. Doctoral Programs

Whatever the specific health field chosen, it is a goal. As a student just entering the process, several basic points must be remembered. First, studying must come first. Second, all aspects of the application process begin on the first day the goal is conceptualized -- GPA, activities, recommendations, and professional examinations. Third, the goal must be true. If a student is following a goal as difficult as a pre-professional curriculum for anything other than the most sincere motivations, it is the wrong choice. However, for those students who know what they want to be, a health care profession is one of the most rewarding choices.

#### APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

During the summer of your junior year, you will be involved in making plans and applying to specific medical schools. It is important to follow the timetable found earlier in this book.

#### I. SELECTING YOUR SCHOOLS:

The MSAR (Medical School Admissions Requirements) will introduce you to the accredited allopathic medical schools in the United States and Canada. Information concerning osteopathic medical schools can be obtained from their web site: www.AACOM.ORG.

To make final selections, you need to research the various medical schools you have an interest in applying to. Not all medical schools will follow the same type of curriculum, and it is important for you to determine the type at the schools you will be applying to. You should apply to all public medical schools in your state of residence. Students from Pennsylvania normally apply to the majority of the medical schools in the state. In addition, you maximize your chances by selecting schools with requirements, cultures, and demographics that are compatible with your situation.

#### II. PREPARING FOR THE MCAT:

The MCAT is a standardized examination designed to assist medical school admissions committees in accessing applicants' academic preparation, achievement in science and written communication skills. The MCAT scores are carefully evaluated by medical school admissions committees. It is a test of achievement and measures mastery of what you have learned. You should have completed the usual premedical biology, general and organic chemistry and physics <u>before</u> taking the MCAT for the first time. The MCAT should not be taken "cold" or for diagnostic reasons. Current information about registration, scheduling, testing dates, and testing locations can be accessed on the MCAT web site at: <a href="https://www.aamc.org/mcat">www.aamc.org/mcat</a>.

The AAMC publishes a variety of MCAT materials including the official MCAT Practice Tests. MCAT Practice Online provides MCAT items including several full length practice tests. MCAT publications are available for purchase online through <a href="https://www.aamc.org/mcat">www.aamc.org/mcat</a>.

Most medical schools look for a minimum of 9 on each multiple-choice section. Some medical schools add the three scores together and have a cut off based on the sum of the scores. Others look at the scores separately. Your scores, in combination with your transcript, are used to determine if you have the mastery of the sciences, plus the general intellectual ability, needed to succeed in medical school. Other indicators such as your essay, extra-curricular activities, letters of reference, and interview will address your suitability for medicine in the more subjective areas of commitment, personal stability, character, etc.

Numerous courses and study aids are available to help prepare for the MCAT. The AAMC (American Association of Medical Colleges) has preparation materials, some of which are available in from the pre-med advisor (students can order their own with the help of the <AAMC.org> web site). Kaplan sells MCAT prep books (www.kaplan.org). Private firms such as Kaplan and Princeton Review offer prep courses. If cost or logistics rule them out, do not assume you are at a disadvantage. There are excellent but more affordable print materials and software available that can help you.

Use the AAMC booklets to help you determine how much and what type of preparation is right for you. The prep courses may be appropriate if you have difficulty finding study time and sticking to a plan. Whatever you plan, you should take the practice exams in a timed test over and over.

For specific dates check the MCAT administration calendar on the MCAT web site at www.aamc.org/mcat.

<u>Medical school.</u> Legitimate reasons for retaking the MCAT include: 1. A significant discrepancy between college grades and MCAT scores. 2. Having taken the MCAT without adequate preparation. 3. Serious illness at the time of the examination. 4. A recommendation from medical school admissions committee.

4. A recommendation from medical school admissions committee

#### III. APPLICATION PROCESS

You are now near the end of your journey to professional school. Completing the application and the interviews are the last step to achieve your goal of entrance into medical school. It is important you give your best effort for this final step. An incomplete application or being unprepared for the interview could hurt your chances considerably for admission by a medical school – at least this time around.

Remember, you control what an admission's committee sees on your application and hears and sees during an interview. Careful preparation and paying attention to detail will positively impress the admission's committee.

#### IV. AMCAS & AACOMAS

AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service) is a common application processing service for the majority of allopathic medical schools in the United States. It does not make admissions decisions but processes, duplicates, and sends your application, transcript, and MCAT scores to the medical schools you designate. The AMCAS application is available via the AMCAS Web site (<a href="https://www.aamc.org/amcas">www.aamc.org/amcas</a>). On the web site you will find links to starting an application worksheet, an application timeline, important FAQ's, and other resources to assist with the application.

Before submitting their application materials, applicants must request that an official transcript be forwarded to AMCAS by the registrar of every post-secondary school in which they have been registered.

Applications for the Early Decision Program must be received by AMCAS by August 1. For regular applicants, all official transcripts must be received no later than two weeks following the deadline for date for application materials.

AMCAS accepts completed applications beginning June 1. If you send it in before June 1, it will be returned. **You should send your application in as soon after June 1 as possible.** The individual medical schools set application deadlines. The earliest deadline is October 15<sup>th</sup> and the latest is December 15<sup>th</sup>. Many schools have rolling admissions – this means that those applicants who get their admissions materials in the earliest will be reviewed first, interviewed first, and offered admission first. If you submit your application late, you could encounter possible delays in the processing. Also, some medical schools may no longer have openings.

A number of medical schools offer an Early Decision Program (EDP) wherein you commit to applying to one medical school. For their part, the medical school commits to a decision on your candidacy by October 1; you agree in advance to accept an offer of admission. If the school rejects you, you can then apply to other medical schools.

AACOMAS: The American Association of Osteopathic Medicine operates a centralized application service, AACOMAS, for its member schools. Students can go to <a href="https://www.aacom.org">www.aacom.org</a> and click on application to apply on line. The application cycle begins on June 1. The schools operate on a rolling admissions basis, so classes may be filled before the deadline dates. Apply early.

#### V. PERSONAL STATEMENT:

This is the opportunity for you to tell the medical school something about you. Remember you are writing for the medical community, which is usually "conservative." The first rule of medicine is, "do no harm." You will want to tell the admissions committee who you are as a person, why you want to be a doctor, what's important to you, and where you are hoping to go in life.

Begin the process of writing your statement by doing some serious self-assessment. What do you devote your time and energy to? What are you passionate about? Who or what have been major influences on your path to medical school? What is special or unique about you or your life story? What significant choices have you made? You have exactly one page in which to indicate to the admissions committee why they should select you for the next entering class.

**Don't write a list of things you have done.** Grab the reader's attention with the first paragraph. If appropriate, use a favorite quotation. Make your statement easy to read – use metaphors, vignettes, or a motif. Describe three or four events from your life that distinguish you and reveal new information not in your transcript or general information section. Personal comments should not be about the medical system and your solutions to

the problems. The essay is about you. It should reveal why you want to commit the next seven to thirteen years to studying medicine.

Be selective. Everything in your statement should be there for a reason. Remember rules of good composition: Introduction, topic sentences in paragraphs, and conclusion. Editing is vital. Misspelled words, punctuation errors, and grammatical errors send the reader the wrong message about you and how you would perform as a physician.

Your personal statement cannot be written at the last minute. You should write and revise several drafts over a period of time. One source suggests it takes at least a month to write a good personal statement.

#### VI. SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION:

Once you have completed your AMCAS application, check and re-check it for spelling errors, incorrect information, etc. Once you are satisfied your application is perfect and you have requested that transcripts from every school you have attended since high school are forwarded to AMCAS, you can send in your application.

#### VII. SECONDARY APPLICATIONS:

Nearly all schools will request that you complete a secondary application. Some schools send every applicant a secondary, while others do an initial screening and only send a secondary to the stronger candidates. The secondary applications vary by school. Some just ask for a little biographic information, while others require a significant amount of writing. The secondary allows you to present your reasons for wanting to attend a particular school. Be sure you have thoroughly researched the school and its curriculum.

#### VIII. THE INTERVIEW:

Being selected for an interview probably means the medical school believes you can handle the academic work required to be successful. The interview gives the medical school the opportunity to learn about you as a person. Candidate's personal qualities are important factors in selection decisions. Evidence of maturity, character, integrity, self-discipline, humanitarian concern, good communication skills, and leadership are all considered in the admission decision.

The interview is one of the most important parts of your application. Prepare for it the same way you might a difficult test: anticipate questions you will be asked and review answers. Many times, the interviewer will base his/her questions on your personal statement and application, so be sure that you are very familiar with what you put on your application!!! Any "disconnect" between your application information and your interview answers will place you at a severe disadvantage. Be prepared to discuss why you want to become a doctor. You may be asked to address medically related current events or ethical issues. You are not expected to be an expert on these topics, but you should be aware of medically related issues and have something reasonably intelligent to

say about them. Follow the news and opinions about medicine and health care in newspapers and current periodicals. If you don't know an answer to a question, don't pretend that you do.

You will be judged initially on your personal appearance. Men should wear a suit or slacks and a sport jacket, dress shirt and tie, dark socks, and leather shoes. Women should wear a suit or dressy coordinates (skirt or dress with a blazer), hosiery, and leather shoes. Try to strike a balance between looking like a prospective doctor and being comfortable with what you are wearing. Jewelry and makeup should be conservative. Facial hair should be well-groomed.

If you have prepared for the interview and have done your homework, the best advice is to relax and be yourself – your most professional self. There is no set length to a medical school interview. Personal questions will probably make up about 80 percent of your interview. Don't answer all questions with just a yes or no. Remember, the interview is a conversation, and the rules of good conversation apply. You should listen as thoughtfully as you speak. Show you are interested in what the interviewer has to say. Make sure you understand the question before you answer. Don't be afraid to take a few seconds to think about what you want to say, then answer thoughtfully and accurately.

Things to keep in mind for the interview:

# Before going into the school:

Review your application and personal statement. The interviewer will ask you questions concerning them.

Review information about that particular medical school. If it is an osteopathic school of medicine, be familiar with osteopathic medicine and philosophy.

It is also a good idea to read over any notes you took (the journal you kept) while you shadowed a physician, so the experiences are fresh in your mind.

Arrive a bit early. Check in with the receptionist or support staff.

Treat every person you meet as you would a member of the admission's committee. The clerical staff and current medical students can pass an opinion about you to the admission's committee.

Carry a pen and small notebook.

Acknowledge the interviewer by name and introduce yourself. Maintain eye contact; don't fidget.

Think before you speak. Do not raise your voice. Be cool and composed.

Enjoy yourself, and make it evident that you are enjoying yourself!

#### WHAT MEDICAL COLLEGES LOOK FOR:

- 1. A strong commitment to becoming a caring physician.
- 2. Strong basic science coursework and laboratories. Medical colleges look for courses during the regular semester not summer.
- 3. MCAT scores of 9 and above.
- 4. Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. Some of these will demonstrate your interest in medicine, while others demonstrate that you are a well-rounded individual, and that you have the ability to manage your time effectively.
- 5. Consistency and reliability in performance. A record of withdrawals, probation, etc. will not be viewed in a positive way.
- 6. Breadth of curriculum, wide variety of skills, and problem-solving ability.
- 7. Having met all curriculum requirements for medical school.
- 8. Emotional health and balance, multiple interests, and ability to withstand stress.
- 9. Ability to work with others and accept responsibility.
- 10. Enthusiastic support from those writing letters of recommendation. Affirmative, specific letters speaking to your achievement and competence will be necessary for admission.
- 11. Solid interpersonal skills, excellent communication skills, and good presentation of self. Your performance in the interview will be very important.
- 12. Knowledge of, and sincere interest in, the school to which you are applying.

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You are by no means expected to read all of these (or even most of them). You are, however, expected to be very well-read by the end of your undergraduate years, including material dealing with the healthcare-related fields. The following lists are given as a resource for a diligent Pre-Med student to choose from.

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