**Dartmouth Health Professions Program (HPP)**

**INTERVIEW TIPS**

**for Medical, Dental, Vet School Interviews**

**(relevant for other health professions as well)**

There are two main interview styles. In **TRADITIONAL INTERVIEWS**, you are typically speaking one on one with an interviewer. There may be just one interview session, though at some schools you might have something like two 30 minute interviews each with someone different. The other style of interview being used at a growing number of MD, DMD, and VMD schools is called the **MULTIPLE MINI-INTERVIW (MMI).** These are are set up quite differently and for the purpose of seeing you in action, over several “stations,” with an emphasis on ethical scenarios. More specific info about the MMI's is in the second half of this document. Preparation for each type of interview is important, and both helps you with the other. The interviewers for either style might be an MD, DMD, or DVM themselves, or they might be a staff member, a faculty member or a current student at that program.

**Remember**: **Getting an interview** **is a true honor, privilege, and opportunity.** Go in with respect for all involved, with preparation, and, as yourself. Note that most people report that their actual experience is far more fun and relaxed than they had anticipated. Good preparation helps allow for that!

**Preparing for Traditional Interviews and MMI’s**

**ABOUT THE INTERVIEW DAY ITSELF:**

It is important to realize that an “interview” of either style, is a whole-day experience. Expect that an interview day will start somewhere between 8:30-9:30 and go until 3:00-4:00 (ish), depending on the school. It might include a talk by someone at a higher level in admissions; someone from financial aid; a lunch with current students; a talk about some aspect the school wants to emphasize about itself; a tour—AND the interview (s) themselves. You need to plan your travel with such a schedule in mind. You would not be able to fit two schools into one day even if you could plan to have them in the same week to combine travel plans.

**AND--THE WHOLE DAY IS THE INTERVIEW:** What does this mean? Aside from the official interview portion of the day, people will observe how you handle yourself throughout the day. Treat everyone you meet with respect and thoughtfulness, from the administrative assistant who checks you in, to the student who gives you a tour, to your fellow interviewees, to the person who interviews you, to the student whose apartment you might be staying with.

**Preparation:**

**Prepare by reflecting, writing, and especially, speaking. By doing so you will:**

* Have “access” to the font of self-knowledge and awareness you need to pull from so that you can be spontaneous and present in the interview.
* “Strengthen the muscles” you will need to respond on your feet when the time comes.
* Be able to be more at ease and natural.
* Be able to skillfully respond **VERBALLY**—which is very different than writing or thinking.

1. **Work with at least several key questions (you can use this url--and many others out there--to find more questions**) <https://www.colorado.edu/career/2018/01/11/frequently-asked-professional-school-interview-questions>
2. **Reflect**: Mull and reflect about them
3. **Write**: Put your pen to paper and write notes/brainstorm answers. Yes, do this part!!
4. **Verbalize**! \*\*Very important. You use different neuronal pathways when you speak. Have friends, co-workers, family ask you some of these questions so you can practice out-loud. You can even talk out loud to yourself in the car, or while washing dishes, etc.
5. **FOR TRADITIONAL INTERVIEWS—Some popular questions you may be asked:**

* Tell me about yourself.
* Why are you choosing the path of medicine? (or dentistry, etc.)
  + What qualities do you bring to the table as a future physician (or to your med school cohort)
* Describe a mentor, role model, friend or family member who has been significant in your decision to pursue medicine? Why?
* Can you describe an experience of responding to a challenging or problematic situation?
* Why are you interested in being at our school?
* What would you describe as a weakness?
  + A common tactic is to pick a weakness that in some scenarios is also a strength. Example: Well, while one of my strengths is my ability to be creative in new situations and arrive at new ways to solve problems. However, at times, I’ve seen that become one of my challenges, because I like to keep coming up with new ideas—which can get in the way of just getting started on something. I’ve learned that sometimes you need to just stop, draw the line, and get started—and not let the perfect get in the way of the good. I'm getting much better at shifting into action after a period of creative brainstorming.”
  + **However,** med school admissions folks are on to this sort of tact so try to work frankly with something simple and true.
* What would you describe as one of your strengths?
* Can you tell us about a time when you needed to work collaboratively and what contribution you made to the group dynamic?
* Can you describe how you have managed a demanding project.
* What are some of the major issues in health care facing our country and the world? What do you know about proposed solutions? Given what is happening in healthcare at this time, what is something you think you’ll face during your career? Given some of the accomplishments in medicine these days, what are some of the opportunities you see ahead for healthcare in your future.
* What do you do if you suspect a colleague (another doc) is abusing drugs?
* What if you knew someone in your class was cheating on their organic chemistry exams—would you take any action? What/Why?
* If you found a magic lamp and could make one wish, what would it be?
* What experience are you most proud of?
* What would you do if you had infinite wealth?
* How do you relax/de-stress?
* Tell me about a favorite book/author

\*\*Throwing in some “random” seeming questions will help you be flexible if an interviewer throws you a curve ball question. Be open minded to unfamiliar questions, pause, and enjoy finding your way to answer. Good prep will help you be flexible with surprises.

1. **Be prepared to speak to any incidents or academic challenges that will have been noted in your application. Just be simple and honest and share how you’ve grown.**
2. **Review your OWN primary and secondary application** before each interview. If they ask you about something in it, be prepared to know what you yourself have shared, especially about your research.
3. **Ethics**: Give time in your preparations to considering what it means for something to be “ethical;” to encounter an ethical dilemma; to see things from multiple points of view (is an ethic universal, or contextual to a particular moment in history/culture/world view). Here is [a good website](https://www.themedicportal.com/e-learning/interview/ethics/) that describes the “Four Pillars” of ethical thinking and offers several questions to consider as examples! Try out answering the questions without reading their comments first!

Ethical scenarios can be presented in either a traditional interview OR MMI interview. Reflect on your own ethical standpoints, and where they come from. You are not expected to be an ethics expert or to have a specific position. They are especially interested to hear how you think through an ethical situation, more than anticipating a correct answer. **\*\*Please see last page of this document for a synthesis on approaching ethical questions.**

1. **Read up on current issues/topics in Medicine** and health related current events. Read past and current health and biomedical related articles/essays in places like the NY Times, Nature magazine, Wall Street Journal etc. You don't have to be an expert, but it behooves you to have awareness of some of the main topics and to have done some reflection on your own about them.
2. **Learn what you can about the school you are interviewing at, review their website, including their curriculum and structure. Think about what questions you want to ask *them***…what would *you* like to know? This is important. Approach your interview, in part, as a consumer. This is your chance to evaluate each school critically and learn more about its strengths and weaknesses. You can ask your interviewers thoughtful and tactful questions like:

* “What do you think are the strengths of your programs?”
* “If you were the Dean, what changes would you institute at this school?”

DON'T ask questions about things you can easily learn from their website (ie: don’t ask, "can you tell me what your curriculum is?" But you could ask: “how is the curriculum re-design going? What do students think and faculty think about students having the freedom not to go to lectures? Etc)

1. **Speak with Students of the school you are visiting.** If you are either interviewed by students or have an opportunity to talk to them, a very good question to ask is “Are you happy at this school and why”? Also “What would you like to see changed?” Interviewees often learn more from current students than from interviewers about the experience of being at the medical school. That said, remember students you meet on Interview day are PART of the interview. Continue to be just as professional—everything you say and do on your interview trip is part of the interview!
2. **Think of specific examples to illustrate answers rather than talk in generalities.** You don’t need remarkable stories for all your answers. Your interviewers want to learn how you handle things, and how you think about things. If you have done the work of rummaging through your memories to find a cache of small anecdotes—then even if you are asked something you hadn't thought about, your "stories" will be more accessible to you-or you will realize an example you had thought of can be viewed in light of the unexpected question.
3. **An interview is a connection with another person**. Be present and mindful speaking **with** them and **to** them, but not AT them in a scripted, press a button and go, kind of way.
4. **You are not trying to have scripted/memorized answers**. The time you put into preparation and self- reflection will give you confidence, help you be more relaxed and natural, and support you to be to respond with some nimbleness—able to think on your feet. Practice helps you integrate your thoughts, feelings and experiences so you can be cohesive: prepared AND spontaneous—rather than precisely scripted.
5. **Be Professional and also, genuine**. Interviewers want to get a sense of you and how you respond to them. They are not necessarily looking for "right" or perfect answers. They are using this interview to help them identify if you have some of the qualities they are seeking in future professionals.

* If you get a question that stumps you...it's OK to say..."ah, that's a really good question, let me think on that for a moment..." and just take a pause.
* It you stumble-- it’s okay to laugh at yourself in the moment, or say “whoops.” What you say is part of what’s interesting to them but so is your ability to be flexible and resilient in an inherently stressful situation.
* Don't try to talk about something you don't know about; stick with what's true. Don't overreach. No hyperbole.
* The interviewers are also people who want to make a connection and get to know more about you. Nerves are normal…they know that too. If you are prepared you will feel more relaxed, and might even…have fun!
* Keep returning to eye contact: for some folks this can feel challenging to their personality, or even their cultural values. In the context of medical school however, they are looking to see if are able to engage personally—with them, and by extrapolation, with future patients.
* Be aware of body language. Don’t slouch. Do be “spatially” engaged with your interviewer. IE, not physically holding yourself back, or holding your arms tight across your chest. When you practice with friends or mentors, ask them to let you know if they notice any little ticks you are not aware of. Be mindful yourself.

1. **Dressing for an Interview.** Professional attire. Even if you are on a tight budget, the simplest and most reliable thing you can do is invest in a suit. One good outfit can go a long way. However, there are suits in many price ranges that are absolutely sufficient so long as it fits you well. On an interview day, you will see that the majority of people are wearing a black suit. That is the easiest thing to do, *but it is not required*. Brown, grey, blue… if you find a suit that fits well, looks professional, and looks good on you, other colors are certainly acceptable. That said, it will be wise to refrain from having your clothes stand out too much—it is YOU who should be memorable. This is a fairly conventional process, so apologies in advance, but some basics to consider:

* For men, a nice button-down shirt and a tie. Some color **is** alright in the shirt and tie. If a suit is truly not feasible, invest in a good pair of slacks and blazer that match well.
* For women, a nice button down shirt OR some other type of blouse/top under your blazer (Look at a Banana Republic or Ann Taylor type websites for ideas). You can use your shirt/blouse/top for a color accent that helps you feel a bit more snazzle-y or matches your eyes. Jewelry is okay but keep it lowkey. Again, a pantsuit is the simplest way to go, however for women there is also the option of skirt or dress, but with the same professional protocol.
* Whatever you wear *make sure you are physically comfortable* enough in it to not have to spend energy and attention on being uncomfortable. That goes for shoes—make sure you can walk in them all day (it’s okay to carry your shoes and put them on there, if you wear boots on a snowy or rainy day).
* If you are flying to the interview, put these clothes in your carry-on, so you don’t risk them getting lost.

1. **Aim to arrive Early** on interview day so you have time to make sure to know where to go, have had your breakfast or tea or coffee etc. Have a moment to breathe and collect yourself. If you get there the day before, and have time-- get acquainted with where you will need to get to ahead of time.
2. **Thanking the Interviewers.**  Of course, make sure to do that at the end of the interview in person. Also, do send a thank you to your interviewers, and to the admissions office as well. Snail mail or email? Definitely email, so it can be added to your file—but it is also nice to receive a paper thank you so that is also highly recommended. However, that is not the time to say “You are my #1 choice"- unless it's absolutely true. Most people don’t truly know at that point in the process. Notes with that type of intent should be separate from a thank you. When you send a note to the admissions email, address it to the Admissions Director by name.
3. Financing Interview Process.

**Ways to save on costs:**

* Call ahead to a Med School and ask if there are current Med students you can stay with. You can ask them or us, if there are Dartmouth alum as well. Not only can it save $$ but gives you a chance to hear a student perspective.
* Got an interview in a city where you’ve applied to other schools? You can give those schools a call and ask, for example: I will be in NYC the week of…if I am lucky enough to be considered for an interview at your school, any chance it could be during that week? (a little more formally of course)

**THE MULTIPLE MINI INTERVIEWS (MMI'S)**

All of the above points are relevant for an MMI interview day as well. However the actual MMI itself is a different than a traditional one. Many schools have adopted it in the last several years. This is a style of interview that began at McMaster University in Canada and is being adopted by more US Medical Schools each year, described in [this article in the NY Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/11/health/policy/11docs.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha23)

**The goal of the MMI interview** is to give Med Schools a more holistic "view" of a candidate in action, by creating scenarios that allow candidates to demonstrate social and communication skills, and ethical and problem solving skills. You are not expected to be an expert, but to show your ability to respond with creativity and engagement. The MMI style is becoming more popular because some Med Schools feel it assists them to get a sense of some of the candidate’s personal/intellectual/professional qualities that relate to becoming a future medical professional. Their hope is to build a strong pool of future doctors who are not only able to apply the science, problem solving, and technical skills of medicine but also able to communicate well with, and be in relationship to, patients and colleagues.

This **style of interview** has been likened to "speed dating." There are several stations. For instance, you might have 6-8 students all standing with their backs to 6- 8 different doors. When the bell goes off, they turn around and read a scenario taped to the door, go inside the room and are now "IN" a mock scenario that they need to respond to for about 7 minutes. Then, they move on to the next. A scenario may reflect ethical dilemmas or social issues in which you will share your thoughts with a group of interviewers, who may or may not ask you questions as you proceed. You might even walk into a scenario actors are playing out a situation that you respond to: How might you approach such a situation? What considerations would there be?

There may be more typical interview questions that come up in some of the rooms. In others, you may be problem solving with another candidate. There are many possibilities.

Most people say these interviews are actually fun and while they may lack the depth of interviewing with one person at a time for 30 minutes, you are making an impression on several people, which allows for multiple impressions—a different kind of “fairness.”

There is **no one way to prepare for such an interview format**, given the possible range of questions (many of them will be unrelated to health & medicine), but we would strongly advise that you keep up with what is going on in health issues these days.

* Do the prepping involved for the more traditional interviews. This will still help prepare you for those and in general get you more comfortable in yourself for these.
* If the school provides you with sample MMI questions ahead of time, use them! You will be asked different questions when the time comes, but you can use sample questions (you can even try making some up) to practice generating a thoughtful, cohesive response in a limited time frame. Have fun with it.
* Get a friend or family member involved. Create a scenario in which they are the actor. Play out questions you might ask them or approaches you might take to their situation.
* Scenarios may or may not be medically related but you are very likely to have at least some scenarios that introduce ethics. Here is a link to a [downloadable book called 101 Ethical Dilemmas](http://lib.aou.ir/App_Upload/Books/484/101%20Ethical%20Dilemmas.pdf#page=34&zoom=auto,-276,576). Read the OP ED pieces in places like the NY times re: health related issues, ethical concerns, along with general articles in the news. There is certainly a lot of fiction grappling with ethical concerns.
* Again, here is [a good website](https://www.themedicportal.com/e-learning/interview/ethics/) that describes the “Four Pillars” of ethical thinking and offers several questions to consider as examples! Try out answering the questions without reading their comments first. (the website does sell services, just use it for the content)

* Familiarize yourself with the different sides of current events issues.
* Give yourself Timed Scenarios, so you can become somewhat accustomed to thinking on your feet and moving on.
* Prepare and be playful. Take it seriously but know you can only prepare so much for these. Show up. Be present. Be willing to jump in.

Though these may seem like they'd be easier for folks who are more naturally extroverted, even our more introverted applicants have enjoyed their MMI experience. Some good preparation ahead of time, and the willingness to dive in is what you need. DO practice engaging and thinking on your feet but you are still yourself! You may find you like it better than you thought.

**\*\* Read next page for a summary of approaches to ethical questions.**

**\*\*\*Read the page following ethics approaches to see which schools are using MMI’s**

MMI Practice Resources

MMI questions are used by the admissions committee to ascertain the following:

* How do you reason through complex decisions?
* What is your moral compass?
* Can you outline the facts you still need to ascertain?
* How do you exhibit professionalism/maturity, empathy, cultural competence, teamwork, motivation, communication, as well as all of the AAMC core competencies?

Four basic ethical principles:

* Autonomy (respecting the rights of individuals and letting them make choices for themselves)
* Beneficence (doing good, what is in the patient’s best interests)
* Non-maleficence (avoiding harm)
* Justice

**Steps in the Ethical Decision-Making Process**

1. Gather the facts
2. Define the ethical issues
3. Identify the affected parties (e.g., stakeholders)
4. Identify the consequences
5. Identify the obligations (principles, rights, justice)
6. Consider your character and integrity
7. Think creatively about potential actions
8. Check your gut
9. Decide on the proper ethical action and be prepared to deal with opposing arguments

Source: May, DR. Steps of the Ethical Decision-Making Process

Current Medical Schools Using MMI’s

* Albany Medical College
* California Northstate
* California University of Science and Medicine
* Central Michigan University
* Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University
* Cooper Medical School of Rowan University (hybrid—traditional + MMI)
* Duke University
* Hofstra
* Medical College of Georgia
* Michigan State University College of Human Medicine (hybrid–MMI + one individual interview with a medical student)
* New York Medical College
* New York University
* Nova Southeastern
* Oregon Health and Science University
* Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
* San Juan Bautista (hybrid–MMI + one individual interview)
* Stanford University
* SUNY Upstate
* Universidad Central Del Caribe (Puerto Rico)
* University of Alabama (hybrid–MMI and one traditional interview)
* University of Arizona–Tucson and Phoenix
* University of California-Davis
* University of California-Los Angeles
* University of California-Riverside
* University of California-San Diego
* University of Cincinnati
* University of Massachusetts
* University of Michigan (hybrid–MMI and two traditional interviews)
* University of Minnesota Twin Cities
* University of Mississippi
* University of Missouri-Kansas City
* University of Nevada–Reno campus
* University of South Carolina Greenville (hybrid–MMI and two traditional interviews)
* University of Texas – Austin (hybrid–MMI, one traditional interview, one group problem-solving exercise)
* University of Toledo
* University of Utah (hybrid–MMI, video interview, situational judgment test)
* University of Vermont
* Virginia Commonwealth
* Virginia Tech (hybrid–one traditional interview and MMI)
* Wake Forest
* Washington State
* Wayne State (hybrid–MMI and traditional interviews)
* Western Michigan University (hybrid–one MMI and one traditional)

**DO schools:**

* AT Still University – School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona
* Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine
* Michigan State College of Osteopathic Medicine
* Pacific Northwest College of Osteopathic Medicine
* University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine
* Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine (hybrid)