



Preparation of Fourth Year Medical Students for Residency Interviews: An Important Educational Opportunity

Brady B. Buchanan, M.S.¹, Amanda I. Higginson, M.D.², Philip J. Boyer, M.D., PhD.³

¹Brody School of Medicine, ²Department of Pediatrics and Brody School of Medicine Office of Student Affairs, and ³Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, United States

Brady B. Buchanan
Brody School of Medicine
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina 27858
buchananb19@students.ecu.edu

Background & Rationale / Need

- Preparation for the residency Match process is generally considered one of the most stressful times during medical school.
- Medical residency interviews are a critical element in the residency selection process, and as such, are often a significant source of stress.
- However, there is a relative paucity of medical literature to suggest best practices for residency interview preparation.
- Given the competitive nature of the Match, it is important for students to thoroughly prepare for the interview season.
- In addition, virtual interviews and their associated challenges are a critical component of modern recruitment.

Methods

- Three formal interview preparation opportunities were made available to M4 medical students.
- Students were surveyed after they submitted their Match lists using a SurveyMonkey.com survey which asked about survey opportunities they undertook, level of confidence in their preparation, and suggestions for future students.
- A Web search using Google.com and a literature search using PubMed.gov, Google.com, and Scholar.google.com was conducted with key words including medical student, residency, preparation, and interview.

Results

- Class of 2023 Brody medical students had three formal interview preparation opportunities available to all students including
 - A **required mock virtual interview** as part of the Transition to M4 week, conducted by a combination of faculty and staff members using standardized questions.
 - An **optional** interview, undertaken by 62 of 78 M4 students, **with a senior physician faculty** member who has participated in resident interviews for 22 years.
 - An **optional** interview with **ECU Career Services (1)** staff, using a standardized question set provided by Brody or / and **(2)** recording service where students are recorded answering questions posed by prompts, listen to response, do it again.
- Other Opportunities
 - With faculty members or residents in specialty for which student is applying
 - Fellow students +/- applying in same specialty
 - Spouse / significant other / roommate

Results

Mock Virtual Interview

- Required / WebEx
- Transition to M4 week
- One Faculty or Staff Member
- Standardized questions
- Feedback: Structured, Qualtrics

- All 78 Students
- Single Session

Dr. Boyer Virtual Interview:

- Optional / 1-hour session / WebEx
- 2-5 weeks prior to first interview
- Resident interview experience: 24 yrs.
- Standardized questions
- Feedback: During session and at end

- 62 of 78 Students
- 2 or more Sessions: 8 Students

ECU Career Services Interview:

- Optional / Virtual & Recording Service
- 2-5 weeks prior to first interview
- Interview expertise: Non-Medical
- Standardized questions from Brody
- Feedback: At end of session

- Number of Students Unknown
- Single Session

Transition to Residency Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What specialty are you applying to, and why did you choose this specialty?
- Tell me about a time you had conflict. What was it, and how did you resolve it?
- Where do you see yourself in 10 years? (ok to skip if you run out of time)

Career Center Questions

- Tell us about yourself and why you have chosen (specialty).
- What are your long-term goals? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- What is a current issue in (specialty) and how do you suggest resolving?
- Describe the most difficult decision you have ever had to make. How did you go about it?
- What are some of the most important factors to you in a residency program?
- What kind of patient do you find it most difficult to relate to? What tactics would you use to establish optimal rapport with such a patient?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Tell me about a particularly impactful experience (either with a patient, or otherwise) that occurred during medical school?
- Tell me about a time you had conflict with someone (peer, faculty, patient, or otherwise) and how you resolved it?

Dr. Boyer: Trajectory / Academic Chair / Questions / Questions to Ask

Survey Results

- Survey responses from 51 of 78 students were obtained (59%)
- Likert scale scores of 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) were combined
 - Interview: Useful in Preparing me for Interviews
 - Transition to M4 Interview: 21/46 (46%)
 - Dr. Boyer Interview: 42/42 (100%)
 - Career Services Interview: 10/11 (91%)
 - I felt well-prepared for my interviews 43/46 (94%)

Transition to M4 Interview - Selected:

- Positives**
 - Gets you thinking about interviews.
 - Low stress opportunity to answer broad questions
 - Immediate feedback
 - A great way of getting the ball rolling with interview preparation.
 - It was great to get an early taste of the interview process.
 - Made me realize that I needed to prepare / how unprepared I was.
 - Got to experience the virtual format for interviews and start thinking about background, lighting, microphone, etc.
- Opportunities for Improvement**
 - I didn't get any meaningful feedback.
 - At the time, felt overwhelming.
 - Perhaps providing a session on general interview prep before conducting practice would have been more helpful.
 - It could be moved time-wise closer to interview season.

Dr. Boyer Interview - Selected:

- Positives**
 - Amazing, comprehensive, essential interview preparation.
 - Gave great advice for background, lighting, mic, camera, etc.
 - I liked being able to ramble off my response and then talk through better ways to organize my thoughts.
 - Great resources and questions provided to interviewer.
 - The individual attention paid to each student's application / personal statement ... made me feel like some cared about my future interviews.
 - Timing about 2 weeks before my first interview was perfect.
- Opportunities for Improvement**
 - I felt I needed to cater my answers to what he thought was the best "type" of programs opposed to the types I was actually applying/interviewing (less academic and research focused).
 - Absolutely nothing. This was amazing and was by far the most helpful advice I received on the topic throughout the entirety of M4 year.

Literature Search

- Multiple Web sites, including from the Association of American Medical Colleges, offer advice to medical students and pre-medical students regarding interview preparation, preceding and following the COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated a move to virtual interviews.
- Some offer some insight regarding factors to be assessed during interview
- Several peer-reviewed articles discuss the role of interviews in medical resident selection, preceding and during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the perspective of the residency program but do not offer suggestions for candidate preparation for the interviews.
- Two peer-reviewed articles provide specific advice regarding interview preparation for medical student interviews from specialty perspective:
 - Surgery program perspective and recommendations.
 - Anesthesiology program perspective and recommendations.
- A series of peer-reviewed articles focus on pharmacy interviews and residency interview preparation.
- Several articles evaluate the dynamics of video communication in general, with respect to eye-contact and other non-verbal tips, with generic suggestions but relevant to medical students preparing for interviews.

Conclusions

- A thorough and deliberate preparation for Match interview positions resident candidates for confidence and success as they begin their high-stress interviews.
- Optimal interview preparation can provide input in multiple spheres:
 - Technical assessment and optimization regarding internet connection, camera, lighting, background, and sound in preparation for virtual interviews.
 - Interpersonal communication strategies including eye contact, facial expression, and head nodding.
 - Realistic evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, and red flag topics (leave of absence, repeat of year, grade in clerkship for specialty for which student is applying) with appropriate preparation to answer questions regarding each.
- Development of "talking points" to highlight experiences and attributes that distinguish the candidate from other candidates and inspires interviewing faculty and residents to remember the candidate ("get in interviewer's head) and advocate for her/him/them when filling out assessments and when determining the department's Match rank list.
- Experience in answering anticipated ("known knowns") questions and feedback about responses.
- Experience in and prepetition when names of interviewers are known in advance for developing questions for departmental chairs, residency directors, faculty, and residents when asked "Do you have any questions for me?"
- Medical students were highly appreciative of and most took advantage of the one or more additional opportunities to prepare for interviews.
- The availability of several preparation options allows students to choose the preparation that works for them.

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