



What Do Applicants Look For? Medical Student Preferences for the Internal Medicine Residency Interview Day: A Cross Sectional Study

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Introduction/Background

Residency recruitment is an essential part of a residency program's success. Each year, thousands of medical students and recent graduates interview for categorical and preliminary first-year positions in Internal Medicine. According to the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP), there were 6,770 internal medicine positions offered in 2015, with 49% filled by United States (US) medical school graduates and the rest presumably by International Medical Graduates (IMGs). Despite a tremendous amount of material resources and time dedicated to the recruitment experience each year both by programs and applicants, little data is available on the preferences of applicants during this process. The purpose of our study was to conduct a survey of U.S. medical school applicants (both categorical and preliminary) as well as IMG candidates applying for a post graduate year one (PGY-1) position in Internal Medicine to identify their preferences towards key elements of the interview day.

Methods

Instrument:

- Survey exploring 10 facets of the interview day based on literature review
- Five point Likert-type scale, where 1 was the most preferred and 5 was the least preferred
- Responses were then dichotomized to represent either "preferred" or "not preferred"

Study sample:

- 265 Internal Medicine (IM) candidates (205 Categorical and 60 Preliminary) interviewed between 11.3.14 and 1.14.15
- Candidates selected from 3,000 ERAS applicants for 22 categorical and six preliminary positions
- Interviewee cohorts:
 - Categorical IM U.S. (n=96, 44.7%)
 - Categorical IM IMG (n=65, 30.2%)
 - Preliminary IM U.S. (n=54, 25.1%)
- Analysis sample = 215
 - Omissions or completed in error: 17%
 - Declined to participate: 2%

Institutional Review Board

- The study was determined to be exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight by the Advocate Health Care IRB on 10.27.14.

Results

Table 1: Overall Preferences for 'Optimal Interview Day'

Question	Response Options				
	7AM-8AM	8AM-9AM	9AM-10AM	10AM-11am	11am-noon
Start Time	35.8%	81.9%	61.4%	15.8%	5.1%
Components of Interview Day	Program Overview	Interviews	Tour	Morning Report	Lunch w/ Housestaff
	78.1%	80.0%	3.3%	9.3%	29.3%
Interview Type	Phone Interviews	Lunch Interviews	One-on-One Interviews	Panel Interviews	Group Interviews
	10.2%	52.1%	98.1%	35.8%	3.7%
Number of Faculty Interviews with	One Interview	Two Interviews	Three Interviews	Four Interviews	>Four Interviews
	22.8%	90.7%	75.3%	8.8%	2.3%
Length of Each Interview	< 15 minutes	15-30 minutes	30-45 minutes	45-60 minutes	>60 minutes
	55.8%	95.3%	42.8%	4.2%	2.3%
Question Type	Straightforward questions	Behavioral questions	Situational questions	Brainteasers	Medical questions
	87.4%	64.7%	37.7%	8.8%	1.4%
Interview Month	October	November	December	January	February
	34.9%	87.4%	63.3%	11.6%	2.8%
Length of Interview Day	< 2 hrs	½ day (~2 hrs)	¾ day (~4 hrs)	¼ day (~6 hrs)	Full day (~8 hrs)
	9.8%	42.8%	82.8%	55.8%	8.8%
Interaction Time with Residents	< 15 minutes	15-30 minutes	30-45 minutes	60 minutes	>60 minutes
	6.0%	32.6%	63.7%	68.4%	28.8%
Interviewer's Background	Residents & Chief Residents	Faculty	Assoc. Program Directors	Program Director	Chairman
	13.0%	20.5%	64.2%	86.5%	15.8%

Table 2: Categorical (US +IMG) versus Preliminary Preferences

Question	Response Options											
	C		P		C		P		C		P	
Start Time	7AM-8AM		8AM-9AM		9AM-10AM		10AM-11am		11am-noon			
	50.8%	40.5%	86.2%	91.8%	94.9%	95.0%	21.3%	20.0%	6.0%	4.0%		
Components of Interview Day	Program Overview		Interviews		Tour		Morning Report		Lunch w/ Housestaff			
	88.7%	95.5%	90.1%	95.7%	4.8%	2.1%	14.4%*	2.0%	41.7%*	69.0%		
Interview Type	Phone Interviews		Lunch Interviews		One-on-One Interviews		Panel Interviews		Group Interviews			
	7.0%**	36.1%	78.2%	74.3%	97.5%	100.0%	56.4%*	34.1%	5.9%	0.0%		
Number of Faculty Interviews with	One Interview		Two Interviews		Three Interviews		Four Interviews		>Four Interviews			
	36.1%	37.8%	94.2%	96.2%	98.4%	100.0%	13.4%	11.4%	3.2%	0.0%		
Length of Each Interview	< 15 minutes		15-30 minutes		30-45 minutes		45-60 minutes		>60 minutes			
	69.4%**	97.7%	96.8%	100.0%	98.8%	100.0%	6.7%*	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%		
Question Type	Straightforward questions		Behavioral questions		Situational questions		Brainteasers		Medical questions			
	90.6%	98.1%	93.8%	87.2%	79.5%*	57.7%	8.9%	13.0%	1.9%	0.0%		
Interview Month	October		November		December		January		February			
	41.8%	58.5%	96.7%*	87.2%	97.3%**	85.3%	13.9%	26.2%	1.9%	5.8%		
Length of Interview Day	< 2 hrs		½ day (~2 hrs)		¾ day (~4 hrs)		¼ day (~6 hrs)		Full day (~8 hrs)			
	7.9%**	27.8%	50.9%**	95.0%	97.1%	100.0%	79.4%**	36.4%	14.1%*	1.9%		
Interaction Time with Residents	< 15 minutes		15-30 minutes		30-45 minutes		60 minutes		>60 minutes			
	6.0%	8.3%	34.8%	50.0%	100.0%	100.0%	84.4%	76.7%	42.6%*	23.3%		
Interviewer's Background	Residents & Chief Residents		Faculty		Assoc. Program Directors		Program Director		Chairman			
	16.4%	11.9%	29.5%	33.3%	89.4%	88.1%	94.0%	97.9%	19.7%	15.2%		

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Results

Table 3: US vs IMG Candidates Preferences

Question	Response Options											
	US		IMG		US		IMG		US		IMG	
Start Time	7AM-8AM		8AM-9AM		9AM-10AM		10AM-11am		11am-noon			
	58.1%*	39.6%	91.3%*	78.3%	92.7%	97.7%	15.1%*	30.6%	3.3%	10.2%		
Components of Interview Day	Program Overview		Interviews		Tour		Morning Report		Lunch w/ Housestaff			
	89.7%	87.5%	85.9%*	96.5%	4.9%	4.5%	15.2%	13.2%	55.0%**	23.3%		
Interview Type	Phone Interviews		Lunch Interviews		One-on-One Interviews		Panel Interviews		Group Interviews			
	4.2%	10.7%	90.8%**	60.0%	97.9%	96.9%	49.3%	67.4%	3.6%	9.8%		
Number of Faculty Interviews with	One Interview		Two Interviews		Three Interviews		Four Interviews		>Four Interviews			
	34.0%	38.6%	95.7%	91.7%	97.4%	100.0%	9.2%	19.1%	3.2%	3.2%		
Length of Each Interview	< 15 minutes		15-30 minutes		30-45 minutes		45-60 minutes		>60 minutes			
	55.7%**	86.0%	97.8%	95.3%	98.4%	100.0%	8.1%	5.0%	2.1%	4.6%		
Question Type	Straightforward questions		Behavioral questions		Situational questions		Brainteasers		Medical questions			
	95.7%**	82.1%	97.0%	89.1%	80.0%	79.1%	6.5%	13.2%	1.1%	3.2%		
Interview Month	October		November		December		January		February			
	43.7%	39.2%	97.9%	94.8%	98.4%	95.7%	6.8%*	23.8%	2.1%	1.6%		
Length of Interview Day	< 2 hrs		½ day (~2 hrs)		¾ day (~4 hrs)		¼ day (~6 hrs)		Full day (~8 hrs)			
	3.8%*	13.3%	53.2%	47.7%	97.6%	96.3%	78.8%	80.4%	13.0%	15.7%		
Interaction Time with Residents	< 15 minutes		15-30 minutes		30-45 minutes		60 minutes		>60 minutes			
	1.1%**	13.3%	31.8%	39.6%	100.0%	100.0%	90.8%*	76.3%	50.0%*	31.3%		
Interviewer's Background	Residents & Chief Residents		Faculty		Assoc. Program Directors		Program Director		Chairman			
	21.7%*	8.8%	40.4%**	16.7%	93.1%	82.9%	91.9%	96.8%	5.8%**	43.1%		

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Conclusion

Our findings of the Optimal Interview Day offer insight into factors of the interview day that will appeal to Internal Medicine candidates. While residency programs are restricted by program specific constraints in conducting interviews, this information will be useful to further tailor recruitment days into a more 'applicant-centric' manner.

References

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2. Scheweiss R, Bergman L, Clayton J. Characteristics of the residency interview process preferred by medical student applicants. J Fam Pract. 1982 Oct; 15(4):669-72.