Job Interview preparation

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Introduction
Job interviews are an inescapable part of a career in medicine. They are an important process allowing interviewers to assess whether candidates would fit in to the particular work environment and if they will perform well in the position. Although there may be some debate over how well this can be achieved in a one-off meeting, the ability to interview well is very important and there are many ways one can prepare in order to improve their performance.

1. Why are job interviews conducted?
   • Understandably workplaces want the best people for the job
     o someone with the qualities they want
     o someone they can get along with
     o someone who is interested in the same things
   • Interviews are not the be-all-and-end-all
     o in context of speaking with referees and CV
     o however, it remains a great opportunity to stand out from other candidates if you are prepared and thinking in the right way

2. Who is usually on the panel?
   • Can be very variable
   • Ask in advance – you may be surprised how much you can find out:
     o who will be on the panel
     o how many people
     o which room
     o what number you will be
   • Usually for junior doctor positions (SRMO, Registrar) there will be 4-6 people
     o always at least someone from the area you are applying for
     o there is always an independent person – from a different specialty, different hospital, patient, or member of the community
     o often you will know someone on the panel – hence you must be able to talk about yourself in front of people who know you

3. How are you marked?
   • Everyone gets asked the same questions and interviewers give a score for each question allowing comparison
   • Interviewers may take notes as a record which can make it difficult to make eye contact
   • Interviewers should have an idea of what kind of answers they are looking for and may have a scoring criteria (e.g. 3 for an adequate response and more if the candidate has done particularly well)
   • In this way, the person who goes first often sets the standard – hence the person interviewed first has the opportunity to set a high standard

Summarised by Dr Nicholas Malouf, RMO, Prince of Wales Hospital. May 2017
4. **In what ways can one prepare for an interview?**
   - Preparation is essential and takes time to be done well – can be thought of as similar to preparing for clinical examination
     - consider potential questions and how you would answer them
     - make sure you have a sense what the job is and what to expect – ask people who have done it before
       - demonstrates that you feel ready for the job
       - shows you care enough about the job that you have put in that effort
       - gives you insight into the challenges of the job
   - mock interviews
     - important to practice saying things out loud and assessing body language
     - ideally with friends or start in front of a mirror or by videoing yourself

5. **What are some common questions and how can you prepare for them?**
   - Most interviews start with a question along the lines of “Tell us a bit about yourself”
     - acts as an icebreaker but also an opportunity to give the interviewers an idea of what you have to offer
   - Usually followed by a question asking why you really want this particular job
     - again try to showcase what you have to offer
     - show you have insight into the position you are applying for
     - good to have a specific reason why you want this job
   - In preparing for these kinds of questions it helps to have three key messages about yourself that you want to get across
     - in what ways can I bring value that others may not
     - can also help in answering questions you are unsure about
       - ABC – acknowledge, bridge, communicate (your message) – similar to media training for politicians but make sure you are still answering the question
   - Make sure you are answering the question that was asked
     - it is important to really listen – particularly the first few questions when you are nervous or with double-barrel questions
     - it may help to:
       - take some time to think before you answer
       - repeat the question in your own words – “I’ve heard you say a scenario involving negotiation and leadership skills…”
       - ask to hear the question again
   - helps to start with an outline of how you will answer the question – “I might discuss the question of conflict resolution first and then come to leadership later if you wish…”
     - shows you have been listening and that you have an approach – this will immediately impress the interviewer
     - gives the interviewer the opportunity to give you some direction
     - for example, if you are talking about conflict resolution but they really want to hear about leadership they can ask you to move on to a discussion about leadership
   - It is important to prepare a few stories that demonstrate your key messages
     - SCAR framework – what was the situation, what was the complexity of the situation, what action did you take, what result did you get and is there something to corroborate this (recognition by someone else)
     - also helpful to have a reflective statement and how you have incorporated this into future practice
6. Do job interviews often include clinical questions?
   • For SRMO and Registrar jobs there is often a clinical question
     o honesty is important – do not pretend to know something well that you do not
     o remember that there will always be a point of seeking assistance and discussing with a
       senior consultant – no one wants a rogue Registrar trying to handle everything by themselves
   • For consultant jobs this is less relevant as you have passed a Fellowship exam and the purpose of
     the interview is not to retest your knowledge
     o although you may be asked - with the emphasis on how you approach clinical problems

7. What kinds of professional and ethical questions can you expect?
   • There is almost always a question on conflict resolution – therefore have a prepared answer for
     this
   • Common to have questions relating to situations that you will likely have already encountered in
     the hospital
     o colleague in distress
     o you or a colleague being bullied
     o felt out of your depth – asked to do something you are not comfortable with

8. What are some general tips on how to interview well?
   • Presentation skills make a big difference
     o body language and diction shape people’s impression of you
     o want to show yourself as professional and confident but definitely not arrogant
     o good to smile at some point and if possible get the room smiling
   • Avoid common pitfalls
     o not listening and therefore not answering the question
     o bland lists of attributes from selection criteria – much better to demonstrate these
       attributes through stories
     o poor body language – slumping/leaning back in chair, appearing arrogant
     o only talking about how the job will benefit you and not volunteering what you will bring
       to the job
   • Think about how you will enter the room and greet the interviewers
     o usually with a small panel they will stand and you may shake everyone’s hand
     o in some cases, this is not practical – it is worth practicing how you will enter the room in
       different scenarios in mock interviews
   • Plan to whom you will direct your responses
     o personal preference whether you address the room at large or the person who asked the
       question or a mixture – e.g. start by talking to the person who asked the question then
       try to make eye contact with the rest of the room during your answer
   • You are more likely to get the job if you can interview face-to-face
     o that being said phone interviews do give you the opportunity to have resources in front
       of you and to write the questions down
     o important to do mock phone or Skype interviews as you will pick up vocal and screen
       habits

9. Take home messages
   • Put the same effort into preparation as you would for a clinical examination
   • Prepare key messages you want to communicate about yourself
   • Mock interviews are a good form of preparation
   • Listen carefully to the questions
   • Start your answers with an outline of your response