

10 interview tips for JMOs and registrars

1. NEVER ASSUME ANYTHING about a job

- This is the biggest (and commonest) mistake juniors make; “So and so will apply; They won’t think I’m good enough; I don’t have enough experience; There will be more candidates than jobs” etc.
- There are lots of things you cannot know and your assumptions will often be wrong...so just focus on those things within your control.
- Before you go on, read and understand those first 3 words individually until they have really sunk in.

2. Never send an email asking someone to be your referee – best is face to face, second best is by phone

- You should offer to email your referee your CV and a copy of your answers to the selection criteria; this will help them tailor their reference to your job.

3. If you really want the job, then you should make the time to go and visit each department that you will be applying to beforehand

- You should phone (not email) the head of department first and ideally meet the rest of the team when you go out (including the specialist on the interview panel – it’s nice to see some familiar faces when you enter the room).
- Offer to email the head of department your CV in advance of your visit even if it was part of your application.
- You should also phone the current registrar and have a long chat; they will know all the ins and outs about the job.
- Not visiting people personally is the second biggest mistake juniors make. Remember, if you haven’t done it, someone else has, and it will help them.

4. Practice doing interviews with colleagues/housemates who are also undergoing interviews; you’re all in this together

- *“The more I practice, the luckier I get”, Gary Player (Golfer)*
- It works best in a group of 3 to 4 with 1 interviewee and the rest on the panel.
- Read up on all the standard interview questions and techniques (try Googling and/or reading the article on [Interview Preparation in ‘Physician Life’](#) [it’s pretty good, but don’t get hung up on the minutiae])
- Pick out the standard first and second last questions (below) and then another 5 standard questions about teamwork, continuing professional education, managing conflict, a specialty-specific hypothetical etc.

5. Giving incomplete answers can really affect your scoring so feel free to say at the end of some or all of your answers, “Does that answer your question?”

- This is a lifeline if you’re: (1) An anxious type; (2) Not good at answering interview questions; or (3) Forgetful of all of the elements of a 2 part or 3 part question. It can help you a hell of a lot and does little harm.
- When you ask “Does that answer your question?” you might get in reply: (1) “Yes thanks” (this is a good sign); (2) “Well actually what I was interested in was...” (this is helpful if you misunderstood what was being asked); (3) “You mentioned [something], can you elaborate on that...”. It’s all good.

6. Use life experiences and interests that you have outside of medicine to illustrate points and reinforce your qualities

- This goes to the heart of generating interest in differentiating you from others and demonstrating your breadth and depth.
- If delivered passionately, this draws the audience (i.e., the interview panel) into your story. These are the things that are remembered during deliberations.
- This can apply to some extent to many of the questions that you may be asked (including the first and second last). Be choosy, not for every question.

7. Do not fall into the trap of trying to be self-deprecating but do strike a balance between promoting yourself (unashamedly) and hubris

- Self-deprecation is a wonderful personal asset without doubt, but in an interview, you run the risk that it can fall flat.
- Consider how an actor would present to his audience in a theatre. Not to suggest that people should act, indeed you should always be genuine, but to ensure that as in a play (or a Shakespearean soliloquy) you draw in and hold the audience's attention.

8. Investigate the hot topics and priorities in the specialty you're applying for

- Otherwise more experienced candidates will have an advantage over you
- e.g., "What priorities do you see in [specialty] for teaching interns?"

9. I think the best first question in an interview is "What personal and professional characteristics do you think distinguish you from other [registrars/JMOs]?"

- You might get a different version of this question, but after dispatching with that one, see if you can answer this one anyway.
- List personal and professional attributes separately and remember to do both.
- Concentrate on your uniqueness (clue: it's not that you're hardworking, diligent, particularly intelligent, dedicated, a good team player, or any other cliché you can think of).
- If you can't think of what it is about you that makes you an attractive candidate, then ask your friends, colleagues, supervisors, mum etc. They will know.
- Some good answers I've heard start with "Supervisors have given me feedback that I'm...[unique strengths]" or "I have been told that I am inquisitive and think outside the square...[with examples]". If you did have to ask your parents, then you could be honest and say "Mum says I have always been...."

10. I think the best second last question in an interview (before "Do you have any questions for the panel?") is "Is there anything you would like to say in support of your application?"

- In some interviews this doesn't get asked so make sure you answer it anyway. There are two options: (1) Have a set spiel and practice answering it or (2) Think about some themes beforehand and then trust yourself to give a spontaneous answer (if you are good at that sort of thing)
- If this question is missed and they end with "Do you have any questions for the panel?" then say "I do have a couple of questions and just before I get to those there are a couple of things that I would like to say in support of my application if I may...[brief pause and if not stopped, then deliver spiel]"