Interviewing for Residencies and Jobs: Tips for Success

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Kristi Kelley, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, CDE, BC-ADM
Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice
Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy
and Clinical Pharmacist, Brookwood Baptist
Objectives

- Define the purpose of interviews
- Outline commonly asked interview questions
- Discuss ways to prepare for interviews
- Identify appropriate attire and body language
- Develop a personal plan to formulate responses to commonly asked interview questions
What’s the purpose of an interview?

- Gain information not evident from your CV
  - Teamwork, personality, intangible qualities
- Test the “fit”
  - From the company/residency program and candidate perspective
- Verify the information known about the candidate
- “Win” the candidate over

How do you prepare for the interview?

- Inwardly reflect
  - What are your goals (short-term and long-term)?
  - What are your strengths and areas for improvement?

- Participate in mock interviews

- Research the position and company/health system

Books
- **Reinders TP.** *The Pharmacy Professional’s Guide to Resumes, CVs & Interviewing.*
- **Bookstaver PB, et al.** *Roadmap to Postgraduate Training in Pharmacy.*

What should you remember during the interview?

- Be honest
- Be engaged
- Be aware
- Be prepared


*Image courtesy of cooldesign at FreeDigitalPhotos.net*
What areas of questions should you be prepared for?

- Education/training
- Personal traits
- Handling of a specific work-related situation
- Pharmacy/work experience
- Career goals
General Pointers for Question Responses

- Keep responses brief
- Use positive words/phrases
- Give focused responses
- Use concrete, recent examples of what you have done
- Think about your answers to commonly asked questions ahead of time
- It is okay to ask the interviewer to repeat the question
- Take time to think before responding
Points to Consider

- Accomplishments
  - Focus on recent ones

- Career development
  - Short-term goals
  - Long-term goals

- Coping with change
  - Structured routine vs. frequent change
  - How do you deal with people who resist change?

- Communication skills
  - Writing vs. oral presentation
  - How would you describe your listening skills?

- Dealing with conflict
  - Think about how you cope
  - Focus on positive outcomes

Points to Consider

- **Handling criticism**
  - What is your approach?
  - Describe an incident that demonstrates what you have learned from receiving constructive criticism.

- **Decision-making skills**
  - What types of decisions do you have difficulty making?
  - How do you make decisions when you do not have adequate data to make the decision?

- **Educational experience**
  - Focus on academic strengths
  - Talk about areas where you were successful and applied your knowledge in work/clinical situations

Points to Consider

- **Issues related to the employer or position**
  - Why do you want this position?
  - How would you fit in?

- **Knowledge of issues facing the profession**
  - Focus on current issues

- **Leadership qualities**
  - Can you be a role model for others?
  - Use the term “we” instead of “I” – team player

- **Teamwork**

- **Management skills/abilities**
  - Looking to distinguish specific skills – planning, organizing, directing, controlling

Points to Consider

- Commitment to life-long learning
  - Need to show your commitment
  - How do you keep up?

- Maintaining peer relationships
  - Give examples of interpersonal skills
  - How do you relate to those difficult to deal with?

- Personal attributes
  - Emphasize positive attributes

- Problem-solving skills
  - Can you think through problems and develop effective solutions?

- Professional/employment experiences

Points to Consider

- Dealing with self-assessment
  - Strengths/areas for improvement
- Stress management
  - How do you work under pressure?
- Technical knowledge/skills
  - Gauge ability to think on your feet
- Time management skills
  - Ability to set goals, prioritize tasks, and time management
  - Be prepared to give specific examples
- Volunteerism
  - Professional organizations
  - Community service projects

What questions should you ask?

- Greatest strengths of the program
- Upcoming changes
- What are the benefits of residency training to organization?
- What type of pharmacist is successful in this organization?
- What unique skills will I gain from this program/training/experience?
- What do people like most or least about the organization?
- What types of relationships to pharmacists have with other providers in this organization?

You’ve made it to the end.....

Concluding the Interview

- Be prepared to ask the interviewer questions
- Have a response prepared if the interviewer says....
  - Anything else I should know about you?
  - Why should we offer the position to you?

Following up after the interview

- Thank you
  - Handwritten note
  - Email
  - Make it personal

Which of the following is an actual interview question?

A. How have you gone above and beyond to help a customer?

B. Describe a time when you were on a team and someone wasn’t pulling their weight: How did you respond? What was the outcome?

C. What are the strengths?

D. What do you want to get our of your job?

https://www.glassdoor.com/Interview/pharmacist-interview-questions-SRCH_KO0,10.htm
What questions should you NEVER be asked?

- Martial status/children
- Religious preferences
- Nationality
- Age
- Health-related

If you are asked any of these, be polite and be vague.

What about a phone interview?

Before the interview
- Know how you will call-in
- Research the program/position
- Allow plenty of time
- Be in the right “place”

Day of the interview
- Minimize distractions
- Be professionally dressed
- Call at the appointed time

During the interview
- Be professional
- Be conscious of time
- Utilize notes

After the interview
- Reflect
- Write thank-you notes

Attire and Body Language
Attire

- Dress professionally and wear comfortable shoes
- Minimal or no cologne/aftershave/perfume
- Neat, professional hairstyles
- Short, trimmed nails
- Cover up tattoos
- Conservative make-up
- Minimal jewelry/accessories
- Carry a portfolio
- Keep the cellphone away!

Body Language

- Smile
- Firm handshake
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Speak in natural way

- Be aware of and minimize annoying habits
  - Ask your friends and family
- First moments
  - Do not start talking immediately
  - Select a seat
- Do not act annoyed if someone interviewing receives a phone call!

http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/Boost-Your-Interview-IQ;
http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/body-language-can-make-or-break-a-job-interview-hot-jobs
What is the residency interview process?

- Submit your application
- Within 2-4 weeks receive invitation to interview
- Interview (January-February)
What will the onsite interview look like?

- Meet with:
  - Residency program director (RPD)
  - Program preceptors
  - Current residents

- Tour of facilities

- May go into a patient care setting

- May share a meal

What are other potential parts of an onsite interview?

**Interview Presentation**

- **Why?**
  - Evaluate knowledge, presentation skills, confidence, ability to answer questions
- **What’s your approach?**
  - Choose an interesting topic
  - Showcase your knowledge and your “uniqueness”

**Clinical Assessment**

- **Why?**
  - Knowledge of basic disease states and critical thinking
- **What’s your approach?**
  - Can be drugs of choice, guidelines, or write a SOAP
  - Know where you are interviewing – *What are they known for?*

Develop a personal plan

How do you make yourself a standout candidate?
Planning Ahead is Key!

Share with your neighbor (as if they were an interviewer):

- 2 strengths you would bring to their company/residency AND
- 2 areas for improvement you will focus on during the next year
ACTION STEP

- Write down 2 things you can do NOW to prepare for residency interviews
Good luck in your pursuits!

Questions?
watsokm@auburn.edu