

## MD2017 – CaRMS MOCK INTERVIEW GUIDE<sup>©</sup>

### Typical and difficult interview questions:

The following is a list of standard questions that are often addressed in some form or other, as well as some difficult questions. Prepare for the interview by writing out and rehearsing your responses to these questions:

| QUESTIONS                                  | TIPS FOR ANSWERING  |
|--|---|
| 1. Tell me about yourself <sup>1</sup> .   | <p><b>This is almost always asked in some form or other. Try to answer in a succinct fashion, between 1-2 minutes in length).</b></p> <p>A typical breakdown includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Background information</u> (I am from a small town, in Northern Ontario, etc.)           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include any elements relevant to your chosen specialty or that are very important to you which come from that background, eg., (for epidemiology and public health): A town where I observed the social determinants of health in my school and community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <u>Education</u> (I then completed my undergraduate degree in... which lead me to medicine)</li> <li>3. 3 of your <u>most proud accomplishments within medicine</u> (since being in medicine, I have completed several research projects in the field of..., in addition to being a leader for an interest group and organizing suturing workshops)           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The goal of listing your accomplishments is not to describe them in detail, but rather to give the panel some insight into activities you have been involved in. They may wish to ask you expand on these later in the interview.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Finish with <u>personality traits and hobbies</u> (in addition to medicine, I am an outgoing person who enjoys playing hockey and dodgeball, travelling and who paints).</li> </ol> |
| 2. What are your strengths and weaknesses? | <p><b>Prepare 3 strengths and 3 weaknesses (but do not offer all 6 examples, unless asked)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If possible, use the <b>‘Sandwich method’ (S/W/S)</b> to answer this question by providing a strength (S), inserting your weakness (W) and ending with another strength (S).</li> <li>• <u>Strengths</u>: Hypothetically, think of the best physician in the specialty you are applying to, what skills would that person possess and do you also share some of these traits? If so, identify them.</li> <li>• <u>Weaknesses</u>: Identify one (1) personal weakness (ie: difficulty saying ‘no’, too sensitive, spending too much time on something, etc.) and two (2) skills-based weaknesses (something technical or something you have not had much exposure to).</li> <li>• This question may be addressed in skill-based form ( ie: what do you do well or what have</li> </ul>   |

<sup>1</sup> Questions retrieved from: Student Affairs Office. CaRMS – Sample Interview Questions.

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <i>had experience doing and not doing?)</i>  |
| 3. What attracts you to this residency (or to this specialty area)?   | <p><b>1. Why the program (prepare 3-4 reasons)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If you have completed an elective there, start by discussing your experience (what you noticed about the residents, team, collegiality, communication, attention to detail, patient population, etc.).</i></li> <li>• <i>Do your research and find out specific points about the program and why you are interested to train there. Vary the technical reasons with the particular characteristics of the work environment (ie: collaborative team).</i></li> </ul> <p><b>2. Why the city (prepare 1-2 reasons)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain what you enjoy about the city (culture, art, museums, sports, etc.) and discuss your family, friends and strong support system who are present (if it is the case).</i></li> <li>• <i>If you have never visited that city, identify reasons why you would be happy to pursue residency training in that location (link to your hobbies, activities).</i></li> </ul> |
| 4. Where do you see yourself in five to ten years?<br><br>OR<br><br>Do you see yourself in an academic or clinical position?                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Describe your vision of your future practice and what you hope to accomplish:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Setting: hospital-based, community-based, or both</i></li> <li>○ <i>Location: remote, inner-city, international, etc.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Population: underserved populations, children, palliative care, etc.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Subspecialties, etc.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Give a general overview of your future goals (be open and flexible). Will you contribute to the field of medicine through:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Research, Teaching and/or Mentorship? Provide examples of your prior experiences.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i><u>Avoid:</u> Being too narrow in your description of your future goals (subspecialty, location, etc.). Programs are looking for candidates who are open-minded, and who understand the nature of the ever changing field of medicine.<sup>2</sup></i></li> </ul>                           |
| 5. Why do you think you are best qualified for this residency program?<br><br>OR<br><br>What do you think you can contribute to this residency? | <p><b>Prepare 3-4 reasons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i><u>Avoid:</u> Reiterating your strengths.</i></li> <li>• <i>Take a look at the CaRMS website to identify the selection criteria the program has described. When you answer this question, identify what the program is looking for and tell them how you demonstrate these qualities, and why it makes you the best fit</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>(ie: You are looking for a resident who has strong communication skills; I have demonstrated this when...)</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| 6. Describe a clinical situation that you handled   | <i>This question looks at your handling of stressful circumstances. It may also take the form of</i>   |

<sup>2</sup> Information retrieved from: Student Affairs Office. MD2016 – Residency Application Tools. Workshop presented to MD2016 cohort on July 21, 2015.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>well and were successful and one where things did not go as well as you would have liked.</p>                                     | <p><i>presenting you with a difficult clinical case scenario with a medical ethics element in it.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use the “STAR<sup>3</sup> – L” Method to answer this question. The objective is for this technique to look seamless to the interviewers. It will help you deliver a well-articulated example.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>S – Situation: Give context to the situation (who, what, when, where, how)</i></li> <li>○ <i>T – Tasks: Describe the tasks you were assigned or the ones you undertook. Identify what was required of you.</i></li> <li>○ <i>A – Actions: What did you do? Describe the steps.</i></li> <li>○ <i>R – Results: Describe how the situation played out, good or bad.</i></li> <li>○ <i>L - Lessons Learned: State the lessons you learned from this scenario. Let them know if/what you would do something differently next time. What is your take-away message?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <p>7. Is a family important in your lifelong goals?</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be prepared for the inappropriate question about having children and achieving balance with being a parent.</i></li> <li>• <i>Be prepared for being asked about taking time off to have children. While Program Directors are not supposed to ask this question, it is often asked.</i></li> <li>• <i>Be brief and bring attention to the importance of your commitment and work-ethic, rather than specific details about your personal life.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>(ie: Family and friends will always play an important role in my life as they are an important support system, however I am very dedicated to this program/specialty....)</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <p>8. How do you get along with co-workers? Tell me about a conflict situation you had with a co-worker and how you resolved it.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use the “STAR – L” Method to answer this question.</i></li> <li>• <i>A person who has no experience of conflict may be considered a conflict-avoider. Be sure to prepare an answer to this question based on a small or large conflict whether it be scheduling, difference in diagnosis, or...? Be willing to share why the ability to cope with or solve conflict is essential.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p>9. Tell us about your 4<sup>th</sup> year elective experience.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If you have completed an elective there, start by discussing your experience (what you noticed about the residents, team, collegiality, communication, attention to detail, etc.)<sup>4</sup>.</i></li> <li>• <i>Place an emphasis on the variety of electives you have completed and on the experiences you have gained.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>It is not recommended to list the specific locations of the programs where you have</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

<sup>3</sup> The STAR technique is frequently used to answer interview questions: <http://www.quintcareers.com/star-interviewing/>

<sup>4</sup> Information retrieved from: Student Affairs Office. MD2016 – Residency Application Tools. Workshop presented to MD2016 cohort on July 21, 2015.

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
|                                | <i>done your electives. Listing the locations could lead to farther inquiries and even put you in the position to compare the other programs to theirs.</i>  |
| 10. Do you have any questions? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare thoughtful, intelligent questions. Make sure there are <b>questions specific to the program</b> you are interviewing at - do your research.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ See the list of sample questions below.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

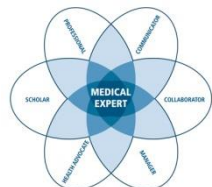
**Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI) Questions**

*In this type of interview, the candidates are put through interview stations where they are asked a question regarding a specific topic. Each station is timed and candidates will only have a specific amount of time to answer the question posed.*

| MMI QUESTIONS  | TIPS FOR ANSWERING  |
|--|---|
| 11. Describe a situation where you made a mistake during clerkship. Explain how you deal with failure.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This question asks you to describe a specific situation and demonstrate your ability to overcome a failure or challenge and how you grew from it.</li> <li>• Describe the situation, how you managed the situation at the time and what you learned from it. You can also use the “STAR – L” Method to answer this question.</li> <li>• Save some time at the end to talk about what you would do differently if ever you were to make a mistake again.</li> </ul> |
| 12. You have noticed that another resident on the team is not completing their work and you have concerns as to how this is affecting the best interest of the patients. What do you do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about attributes that you believe are essential for success as a doctor (ex: integrity, ability to think critically) and integrate these attributes into your answer.</li> <li>• Illustrate how your colleague’s behaviour could be damaging for the patients and/or the team.</li> <li>• Elaborate a course of action you would take as to how to solve the problem.</li> </ul>  |

**Tip!:** Prepare examples of situations where you demonstrated leadership qualities, strong communication skills, etc. If you prepare a scenario for each CanMEDS role, you will be able to use them interchangeably to answer various interview questions. Develop each answer using the “STAR-L” Method.

1. Professional
2. Scholar
3. Communicator
4. Collaborator
5. Manager
6. Health Advocate



**Your e-portfolio entries can often provide details for these scenarios.**

**Additional Questions:**

1. What are your overall career goals?
2. What do you do in your spare time?
3. What influence do you think your family had on your life?
4. What is your favorite colour and how does it reflect your personality?
5. You are a senior resident and a junior resident constantly shows up late. What do you do?
6. What training opportunities have you taken advantage of and why?
7. How confident are you that you can successfully perform the duties of the position and why?
8. Describe a situation where you came up with a creative solution to a problem.
9. What does it take to get under your skin?
10. What is the most/least attractive aspect of the residency position you are applying to?

*Additional areas from which you may also expect questions: Education, personal ability, personal traits, clinical experiences, liabilities, career goals, handling a specific situation or type of patient.*

**Tips for Handling Difficult Questions:**

- Prepare your responses to questions that may be difficult for you ahead of time with help from an advisor. Concentrate on areas that are of the most concern to you.
- Think before you answer.
- They often ask what other programs you have applied to and why. They may also ask at what other places you have interviews, whether they are supposed to or not. Be prepared to answer these diplomatically.
- Be brief, and respond to the question in a factual way. Provide only the necessary information.
- Ask the interviewer to restate the question if you do not understand it.
- Never lie or overstate.
- Anticipate difficult questions; prepare your responses in advance; and rehearse. If you have for example a failure of a year on your transcript, prepare an honest response for any questions related to this.

**Tips for Asking Questions:**

- Prepare three to four questions you could ask at the end of the interview in case the interview panel allows you time at the end for questions. Having prepared meaningful questions will demonstrate your enthusiasm for the school and the program. Avoid questions that could easily be answered by looking on the program website.

**Sample questions to ask the interviewer:**

1. What is the patient population?
2. What is the philosophy of the program?
3. What is the interaction between house staff and attending?
4. What type of applicant would you consider ideal for the program?
5. Are any program changes planned in the next 3 years?
6. Which departments or sections are the strongest? The weakest?
7. How long has the Program Director been in his / her position?
8. Who goes to Grand Rounds and other conferences? Specifically, how often does house staff get to go to conferences?
9. How visible is the Chief? The Chief Resident(s)?
10. Does the Chief spend regular time with the house staff? If not, who does?
11. Does the Chief Resident spend regular time with the house staff?
12. What medical schools have the house staff come from?
13. What do the residents do when they finish?
14. What fellowship opportunities are available in this hospital?
15. How much patient contact will I have?
16. What types of patients will I see?
17. How would you compare your program to other programs?
18. Are some rotations done at other hospitals?

**Sample questions to ask the residents in the program of interest:**

1. Are you happy with your choice?
2. What was the most important factor that made you come to this program?
3. What are your plans after graduation?
4. What's a typical week, month, year like for a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year?
5. What is call like? What kind of backup is provided?
6. How do you deal with the stress of residency?
7. If there are other residency programs in-house, how do you view their presence?
8. What do you/other residents do outside the hospital for community service and for fun?
9. Where do you feel most of your learning is coming from?
10. What are the program's areas of strength?
11. What are the areas of the program where improvements could be made?

**Additional Resources**
**Interview Question Resources:**

- Career Development Resources webpage gives information on how to answer general questions, behavioral questions and situational questions: <http://www.uottawa.ca/career-development-centre/job-search/job-interview>
- Quint Careers guide to job interviewing resources and tools: <http://www.quintcareers.com/intvres/>

**MMI Resources:**

- Future Doctor.net: <http://www.futuredoctor.net/mmi-multiple-mini-interview-format.shtml>
- McGill MMI preparation guide: <https://www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/gradschool/medinterview>
- University of British Columbia MMI format: <http://mdprogram.med.ubc.ca/admissions/interviews/>
- Multiple Mini Interview questions: <http://multipleminiinterview.com/mmi-questions/>