Top questions to ask during your residency program interviews

JAN 4, 2016

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Beyond the opportunity to leave a great impression, residency program interviews give you the rare chance to assess whether a program is the right fit for you—but only if you ask the right questions. As you travel to various interviews, keep this list of questions handy to conduct an effective conversation with program directors and current residents.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) created a list of key questions physicians in training recommend students ask to learn important information about residency programs. They suggest asking various people you meet during your interviews different questions to gain a holistic picture of the program you’re considering.

Questions to ask program administrators

Ask program staff questions that will help you understand the educational, research and clinical opportunities you’ll receive in training. It’s also wise to talk to staff about employee benefits, faculty and resources the program offers residents. Broken down by topic, here are some key questions the AAMC suggests for an informative residency program interview.

On education:

- Is there an orientation program for incoming residents?
- What programs exist for resident education? Are there opportunities for lectures, journal clubs, grand rounds and board review courses
- What formal and informal learning opportunities can I expect? Is there an official didactic curriculum in this program? If so, how is it structured?

On clinical duties:

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What is the general call schedule? Are provisions made for back-up call or sick-call coverage?
How much support do residents receive from other members of the care team?
What type of supervision structure is in place for residents?
Does the general volume of clinical work support a balance between service and education?

On employment benefits:

What are the basic resident benefits?
Are meals paid for when on call?
Is there a reimbursement policy for educational supplies and books?
What is your family leave policy?
Are moonlighting opportunities available? If so, what are the rules for moonlighting?

Questions to ask other residents

One of the most valuable sources of information on any program will be the residents in training. Speak with residents about key issues such as work-life balance, transitioning to residency and resident satisfaction to gain insight into the program’s culture. Ask residents these candid questions and carefully note how their responses align with your expectations for training.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
Would you consider the same program if applying again?
How accessible is the faculty?
Do residents get along with one another?
What activities are you involved in outside your program?

Read the full list of questions from AAMC, which covers other essential considerations, including residency performance and evaluations, research and teaching opportunities and requirements, and questions you should ask yourself following an interview.

Want more tips for applying to residency? Check out these resources

Get six key tips to help you excel on video interviews for residency.
Learn how to write a competitive CV using these six strategic steps.
Find out how many residency programs students really apply to each year (broken down by specialty).

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If you're still in the early years of your training but are getting a head start preparing for residency, also be sure to consult this must-have checklist of tasks to prioritize during your first and second years of training. Also, save this second checklist for success during your third year of med school.