So you've been admitted to medical school: Now what?

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By spring of your application cycle, you likely have received your acceptance offers to medical schools. The deadline for those applying to MD-granting schools through the American Medical College Application Service is April 30. For those applying to DO-granting medical schools, the process tends to be a bit more open-ended, but it is, in most instances, resolved by May.

Once you pick the right school for you, however, the work is just beginning.

John D. Schriner, PhD, is associate dean for admissions and student affairs at Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, one of 37 member schools of the AMA’s Accelerating Change in Medicine Consortium. He outlined a few next steps to take after committing to attend a medical school.

Get your paperwork in order

The medical school admissions process requires its share of paperwork, and that doesn’t end after acceptance, Schriner said.

“Keep an eye out for all of the additional communications that are going to come from the med school regarding the paperwork you need to take care of before starting,” he said. “this includes things like immunizations, background checks, health and technical standards documents, and other requirements relative to your transition to the medical school. Getting those issues taken care of early can lend to a smooth start.”

Make a plan to bridge the financial gap

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You are likely taking a loan out to help pay for medical school, but those funds tend not to be available too close to the beginning of school. That means you’ll need some additional funds to help you with the transition to medical school.

“Some folks are probably going to be working some sort of job maybe during that summer before to try to stockpile some cash for the transition,” Schriner said. “Some folks are lucky, and their family resources are such that they are going to relax and spend time with friends and family or maybe travel. There are a lot of folks who are working right up into the point where they are going to move. Whatever your situation, you don’t want to be caught short on funds, if at all possible.”

Get the financial checklist for your first year in medical school.

Consider your knowledge gaps

If there are topics on which you may have struggled on the Medical College Admission Test, you can benefit from studying those in greater depth before medical school begins.

“I’ve heard some med schools tell incoming students not to study anatomy because the school wants to teach it to them,” Schriner said. “But if you’re coming in with almost no exposure to anatomy, that might be a tall order. To me, if you know going into med school that there are certain subject areas you might not be as well versed in, I’d look to get acclimated to some of the resources on those topics.”

Learn the 15 skills medical schools expect from students on day one.

Don’t drag your feet on housing

Almost every medical school will offer some sort of housing resources for incoming students. They also are likely to connect you with your soon-to-be classmates for those who may prefer or need to live with roommates.

Whatever your preferred living arrangement, finding a place to live and getting to town in advance of school should be priorities.

“Our orientation starts in mid-August,” Schriner said. “I always suggest to folks that they plan on being moved in no later than Aug. 1. Usually, you are going to be starting a lease at the beginning of a month. My advice is if you can move in a month in advance, that is going to give you an opportunity to
get physically settled into your new housing situation and acclimated to your new surroundings and community."

Medicine can be a career that is both challenging and highly rewarding but figuring out a medical school's prerequisites and navigating the application process can be a challenge into itself. The AMA premed glossary guide has the answers to frequently asked questions about medical school, the application process, the MCAT and more.

Have peace of mind and get everything you need to start med school off strong with the AMA.