



BMJ careers fair

Oct 8-9th 2010

West Midlands

Polishing up your interview skills

INTRODUCTION:

Talk was given by Kathleen Sullivan at KScoaching.co.uk whose company specifically deals with preparing doctors for job interviews.

The 4 main things to keep in mind:

- **Know yourself** (What sort of doctor are you? People like people who are like themselves).
- **Know your CV** (Questions can be asked about anything on your CV, do not lie).
- **Know the Speciality** (commitment, interest and enthusiasm).
- **Know the role** (get a copy of the job description and speak to people doing the job).

The basics:

- Leave plenty of time for travelling to the interview, leave room for any traffic delays. It's worthwhile doing a dry run prior to interview day.
- Make sure you bring the telephone number of the interview centre in case of any delays.
- Bring emergency supplies such as spare tights/tie.

HOW TO PREPARE:

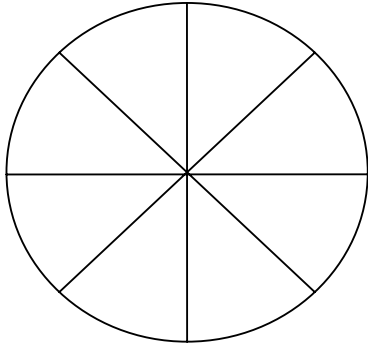
Find out how you will be assessed and plan your preparation around this.

For medical interviews methods of assessment include:

- Competency based panel interview.
- Portfolio based interview.
- Simulated patient scenario.
- Patient consultation.
- Presentation.
- Group exercise.
- Written test or exam.

Focus on the areas you fear or are worried about by doing the interview wheel test:

- Draw a wheel as below.
- Label each spike with the qualities you would expect a really good interview candidate to have.
- Imagine the centre of wheel has value of 0 and each spike has a value of 10, then rate how well you would score on each of the qualities



- Plot points on the wheel and then join the plots
- How well would your wheel roll?
- You should aim for a balanced wheel; you don't need to be exceptional in every area.
- This challenge helps identify areas where your preparation is weak and needs work

HOW TO CREATE A GOOD IMPRESSION FOR THE INTERVIEW PANEL:

When entering the room:

- Smile 😊
- Walk straight and tall
- Firm handshake making eye contact

During the interview:

- Sit up straight
- Don't fidget
- Make eye contact with all members of the panel.
- Speak clearly

How to build up a rapport with the panel:

- Mirror the body language of panel members such as nodding or hand gestures.
- Again, eye contact.
- If you get a 'poker face' panel (shows no emotion, gives no encouragement) firstly – Don't worry! They are often told to stay emotionless. You can create an 'artificial rapport' by repeating back some of the words used in the question when giving your answer.

General Points:

- The panel want to get to know you, so make sure they see a bit of your personality.
- Dress professionally – neat, tidy and conventional. You shouldn't stand out for the wrong reasons.
- Modulate your voice, add a bit of expression, don't say everything monotone.
- Use hand gestures and body language to appear animated and enthusiastic.
- If you don't understand a question, it's ok to ask for clarification.
- When in a hole – stop digging! Just say 'I'm sorry, I've got a little lost, do you mind if I start my answer again?'

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR 'SELLING POINTS':

Some techniques for figuring out your unique selling points and tips on how to present them to the interview panel.

Review your achievements:

- What skills do you possess that have allowed you to achieve. *If asked about a specific achievement, don't just talk about the achievement. Talk about what it is about you that has allowed you to achieve that.*

- Is there anything you have done that nobody else has? *What qualities do you possess that led to achieving this.*
- What skills do you have and how have you achieved them.

Use examples how to quantify how good you are:

- Is there anything that others think you do well with ease? *If someone has praised you face to face or in a mini-PAT then quote them. This is a good way to sell yourself without looking arrogant. Plus it shows that you have reflected and makes it believable information.*
- Name specific examples to demonstrate things you are good at i.e. *don't just say I am good in an emergency situation, instead say 'I know I am effective in an emergency as I have done the following... Paint a picture of yourself in the job so that the interviewers can visualise you in the role.*
- What positive impacts have you made? *What are you specifically going to bring to the team.*

THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS:

The question that everyone dreads – What are your biggest weaknesses:

- To try to add a positive spin to your answer the method suggested was to first pick three things you really like about yourself at work.
- Next, look at how the good things could potentially lead to bad things.
- Then talk about how you are working to improve the bad point
- For example....

What do you value about yourself at work?

How might you 'block' yourself at work or hold yourself back?

I am an excellent team player



I sometimes find myself working so much for the good of my team that I find I neglect my personal development.

I've been working on improving this by setting aside some time each week to do some individual work.

I really enjoy getting to know my patients.



I can sometimes get a bit too emotionally involved with my patients and their families which means I often think about work in my free time.

I'm trying to improve this by continuing to do my best for my patients but making sure I talk through any particular worries with my seniors and by setting aside time to do something relaxing after work.

- By talking about how you have sought to improve your weak points you are showing that you have reflected on these.
- When mentioning the 'bad points' make sure to use 'sometimes' or 'on occasion'.

An example answer to the question: 'What is your main weakness?'

'Sometimes I cannot say no to others demands, however this is because I am quite reliable. I have reflected on this and watched how others prioritise their work to prevent themselves from being overloaded and I have taken steps to be more assertive.'

PREPARE FOR TYPES OF QUESTIONS RATHER THAN SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

Common types of questions include:

- **Understanding questions** – e.g. What do you understand by....? Can you explain...? what are the essential elements of...? *May often be regarding topical NHS issues such as e.g. the white paper, clinical governance, EWTD.*
- **Scenario questions** – e.g. what would you do if...? How might you react if...?
- **Behavioural questions** – Describe a situation in which you showed (certain qualities)...?
- **Experience questions** – Tell me about your experience of...?
- **Motivational questions** – What appeals to you most about...? What makes you think you are suited to...?

A good tool for answering questions that call for you to describe a specific example is the STAR technique:

- **S – Situation:** Describe the situation very briefly.
- **T – Task:** Show that you recognised what needed to be done, your 'task'.
- **A - Action:** Talk about what you did.
- **R – Results:** Reflect on the outcome.

EXAMPLES OF WIDER NHS ISSUES THAT MAY COME UP IN MEDICAL INTERVIEWS:

- Clinical governance
- Evidence based medicine
- Data protection
- NHS reforms and modernisation agenda
- European working time directive
- Fitness to practice, appraisals, assessment and revalidation
- Professionalism, integrity, ethics

Think about what issues these topics raise and where you stand on them, have some reasons for your stance. But make sure you demonstrate you can appreciate the other side of the coin too.

e.g. ***'In your view what effects does the European working time directive have on your professionalism and career'***.

Useful links:

- www.institute.nhs.uk
- www.dh.gov.uk/en/managingyourorganisation

- www.interview-intelligence.com/articles.php
- Darzi report
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085825
- Tooke report: www.mmc.inquiry.org.uk

POWER WORDS:

Make your answers interesting and memorable using 'power words'

- Rather than saying I was *involved* with teaching medical students try 'I was **responsible** for **leading** a group of my peers in the **teaching** of final year medical students. I **created** a timetable for everyone who wanted to teach and **liaised** with the medical school to ensure that the teaching sessions were tailored towards the medical student's curriculum.'

Large list of examples of 'power words' available in BMJ issue from the 18th Sept. (Article written by K S Sullivan).

USEFUL INTERVIEW TACTICS:

- Allow your personality to come through – try to talk to the interviewer as you would talk to a friend.
- Stay focused and slow down.
- Structure each question – can count out points on fingers
- You can provide structure retrospectively – 'In summary the three points i wanted to highlight were...'
- Give yourself thinking time – 'in answer to your question..., I would like to begin with..., ' using the same words as the interviewer makes you more likable.
- Have a 2 second pause – plan your answer.
- Seek clarification – 'Would it be useful for me to use an example?'
- Can use a hidden compliment – 'That's a very interesting question'.
- Ask for feedback – 'Was that a useful example?'

HOW TO BREAK THE BAD INTERVIEW CYCLE:

The bad interview cycle – '***I feel nervous so I think it will go badly so I do nothing and that makes me more nervous***' - instead do something – make yourself confident and break that cycle.

Actions to take:

- Ask consultant to do mock interview, get feedback and practice improving, visualise yourself being positive and getting the job.
- Monitor your self talk – careful about what you say to yourself – don't tell yourself you are bad at it – or your subconscious will find evidence to support that belief

LEAVING THE INTERVIEW:

- Again – smile, and make eye contact.
- Thank the panel for their time.

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