



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting

October 18, 2020

adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu



Introduction

- I. Welcome!
- II. Why do you want to be a physician or enter the pre-health track?
- III. Goal-setting
 - a. Risk/benefit ratio in decision-making
 - b. Determine your goals both inside and outside of medicine

Resources

I. *Resident Tutors:*

- a. Rumbi Mushavi, Varnel Antoine, Richard Newcomb, Chelsea Messinger, Emiliano Valle
- b. E-mail: adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu
- c. WEBSITE: <https://adamshouse.harvard.edu/pre-med-advising>

II. *Non-resident tutor (NRT) staff*

- a. Role of the NRT
- b. Medicine as a career choice (especially useful for the undecided)
 - Non-medicine NRTs are also available - please let the tutor team know if you are thinking of a different health professions graduate school
- c. Application process: writing Dean's letter

Bottom line: **Get to know your NRT!!**

- We'll be having study breaks to get to know them.
- Be proactive and contact them! They are **key** support system in preparation for and during the application process

III. *Office of Career Services (OCS)*

- a. Emiko Morimoto and Oona Ceder (premed@fas.harvard.edu)
 - a. They should be contacted as soon as possible if you are considering non-MD programs (e.g. vet school, dental school, PA school, nursing school)
- b. ***OCS website: <http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students/careers/medicine.htm>
 - a. [Premedical Information for Harvard Students](#)
 - b. Sign up to the pre-health listserv!
- c. Medical school information – including alumni evaluations of schools (this is most appropriate when deciding on a school list for applications)

IV. *Published books, other resources*

- a. [Medical Schools Admissions Requirements \(MSAR\)](#)
- b. OCS Booklet with Harvard Undergraduate-specific data
- c. AMCAS website --<http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/>
- d. Other – medical school websites

V. *Financial resources*

- a. [Fee Assistance Program](#) (up to two calendar years from when you submit your Fee Assistance Program application)
 - i. Reduced registration fee, from \$315 to \$125, for MCAT exams until December 31st of the year you submit your Fee Assistance Program application
 - ii. Complimentary access to the Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR) website



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting October 18, 2020



adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu

- iii. Waiver for all AMCAS fees for one (1) application submission with up to 20 medical school designations (\$930 value)
- b. Financial Aid Office
 - i. Reach out to your financial aid officer about your options to taking out additional loans to apply to graduate school (deferred while in graduate school and more)

Components of a successful medical school application

I. *Numbers*

- a. Grades—yes, they are important [OCS Med School Admission Data]
- b. Importance of science GPA
- c. Pre-med requirements – Biology (with lab), Chemistry (with lab),
- d. Physics (with lab), Math/Statistics, English: please see OCS website for list

II. *MCAT*

- a. Prep coursework
 - i. MCAT practice manuals, old exams from AAMC
 - ii. Kaplan/Princeton (both ~\$1500), ExamCrackers
 - iii. [ANKI](#) (free desktop and android flashcard app, \$25 for iOS-Phone/iPad)
 - YouTube ANKI Tutorials
 - Look at Reddit and google for Pre-made ANKI Decks for MCAT prep
 - iv. [UWorld](#)
- b. **What is it:** Electronic, but not adaptive
- c. **When is it:** Now offered very frequently, but dates fill up fast
- d. **How long does it last:** Expires in ~ 3 years
- e. **How to afford:** Please apply to the **Fee Assistance Program** *before* booking your MCAT to save on money with reduced MCAT costs and waived AMCAS primary and supplemental applications

III. *Extracurricular Activity*

- a. Why do extracurriculars?
- b. Public service
 - Talk to [Adams House public service tutors!](#)
 - Public service organizations at Harvard: <https://publicservice.fas.harvard.edu/>
- c. Clinical experiences (**critical**)
 - Mt Auburn/ Cambridge, Project HEALTH,
 - CrimsonEMS
 - Red Cross Disaster Relief
 - Senior NRTs
 - Crimson Care Collaborative (CCC) at HMS
 - Harvard College Alzheimer's Buddies
- d. Athletics/ Music/ Other
- e. Leadership positions

IV. *Sustained scholarly project*

- a. Medically-oriented research
 - i. Importance of basic science or clinical research, NOT a requirement!



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting
October 18, 2020



adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu

- ii. Selecting a laboratory to work in
- b. Duration of research
- c. Relationship with professor or doctor
- d. Research credit/funding opportunities
- e. Senior Honors Thesis (in any field!)

V. *Recommendations* – Ask **EARLY** - Important to not wait until the last minute!

- a. Ask for one each semester
- b. Know your teaching fellow/professor
- c. **Do not procrastinate**, and ask when they will remember you
- d. Explicitly ask if they can write a **STRONG** letter of recommendation
 - a. Asking for a letter can be done in-person or by email. Both strategies have advantages. In-person adds a nice personal touch and by email allows a prof or TF to make an excuse if they don't have time or don't feel like they can write a **STRONG** letter of recommendation
- e. If teaching fellow is writing, highly recommend that professor co-signs.
- f. Info to give a letter writer:
 - a. A cover letter (or explanation for interest in medicine) and CV/Resume
 - b. A waiver form (house form)
 - c. [AAMC Guide to Letter Writers](#)
 - d. Guidelines (OCS) for writing a pre-med letter
 - e. The format of the letter: Ask that the letter be written on **official letterhead** with a **signature** included at the end.
 - f. Letters of recommendations need to be addressed along the lines of "To the Medical School Admissions Committee" or "To the Veterinary School Admissions Committee."
AVOID addressing LOR to specific schools (To HMS)
 - g. Where the letter should be sent: The letter should be sent by email to the **Adams Academic Coordinator** at adams_coordinator@fas.harvard.edu. Subject line: "Letter of recommendation for medical school - FirstName LastName"
- g. At least two science letters from course instructors, one letter from concentration, and one extra-curricular or non-science instructor letter, try to find someone who could speak to your potential as a physician
- h. Inviting your faculty and TFs to **Faculty Dinners** hosted every semester in Adams House is a good way to get to know your professors and Teaching Fellows on a more personal level

Considering dual degrees

I. MD/Ph.D.:

- a. These programs can be NIH funded (MSTP); there are ~40 programs around the country with funded MD/Ph.D. spots.
- b. The savings from the fully-funded status must be weighed against the years (3-5) that the Ph.D. takes to complete
- c. Talk with one of our MD/Ph.D. tutors (Chelsea or Emiliano) for advice
- d. Think carefully about what you are trying to achieve with the two degrees.

As an alternative to the PhD, many students engage in 1-2 years of research during medical school through various funding agencies (HHMI, NIH, Doris Duke, etc).



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting

October 18, 2020

adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu



II. MD/MBA, MD/MPH, MPP (@ Kennedy School), MS (vs MD/PhD)

- a. Many schools now offer these programs
 - Both usually just add one year to your training (5 years vs. 4 years)
- b. Think carefully about what you are trying to achieve with the two degrees. Do you need both? Which one do you most want and which is secondary?

Application year calendar

*OCS has useful workshops as well—see their webpage for schedule

*Ongoing: be sure to register for the MCAT!

I. December 2020

For those applying in the next cycle, you should meet with NRT by this time!

Ask for recommendations before you leave for break.

II. February 2021

Mandatory Meeting for all applying students this current cycle.

Finish asking for recommendations

****This meeting is also required for seniors who are not applying, but leaving the house***

III. March 2021

- a. All recommendations from previous semesters due
- b. Intention to apply to medical school form
 - We will reach out to you closer to March with instructions on how to submit these documents
- c. Check in with NRT to discuss pre-med packet and application by March
- d. Premedical Packet due to the House (we will provide instructions on how to submit)
 - Provides extensive information to us / NRTs in writing the Dean's letter
 - Helps you better define interests and goals in pursuing medicine as a career
 - Includes a complete list of recommendation letter writers
- e. Materials must be submitted on time in order to take full advantage of the mock interviews (see below)
- f. Missing letters of recommendation WILL delay your application.

IV. April 2021

- a. Mock interviews: mid-April
 - Opportunity to experience interview in a no/low-stress setting
 - Helpful comments from our NRT staff on the interviewing process.
- b. Personal statement and Interview workshop: late-April

V. June 2021

- a. Your AMCAS application should be completed by mid-June.
- b. Online application and details can be found on AMCAS website.
- c. MCAT must have been completed by late June (at the latest).



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting
October 18, 2020



adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu

Alum in your Gap Years? You must contact us in the Fall of the year before you apply so that we can set you up with an NRT.

- a. **Example:** If you are five years out and planning on submitting your application in June 2022, you should contact us (adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu) in the Fall of 2021.

QUESTIONS? Please look at the Adams Premed and OCS WEBSITES first.

Then email adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu if you cannot find the answers!

COVID-19 Pandemic Updates

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruptions in academic curricula and in medical school application process. AAMC, AMCAS, medical schools and universities across the country are working hard to adapt to the new constraints this pandemic has placed on everyone. Below are a few important points to remember:

1. Course work:
 - a. Harvard's Spring 2020 universal satisfactory/unsat course grading system will not affect medical school admissions. In fact most, if not all, medical schools will accept pass/fail graded courses taken during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. Previously, lab classes would only be accepted if they were taken as in-person courses. Most schools will accept online lab coursework taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. LOR:
 - a. Continue to remain engaged in your classes. Attend offices and do not be afraid to ask for LORs.
3. Volunteering, clinical experiences and shadowing:
 - a. Be creative in finding ways to explore and learn more about the clinical environment. Remember, shadowing is so much more than another pre-med requirement, it also helps you ascertain if the clinical environment is the right fit for YOU.
 - b. Remember to pick clinical opportunities that are safe and that do not put you or anyone else at risk
 - c. There are many alternative opportunities to physician-shadowing including volunteering in a hospice, becoming an EMT, becoming hospital/clinic scribes, caretaking (broadly speaking)
4. Application process:
 - a. In order to give pre-meds access to accurate application, specific information, AAMC has made the MSAR report publicly available and will update this frequently
5. MCAT:
 - a. After massive cancellations in MCAT exams in March – May, AAMC created a shortened MCAT to account for applicants that still needed to take the exam and for the new regulations in administering the test in order to assure safety and reduce risk of spread of COVID-19.
 - i. MCAT result reported in ~2weeks
 - ii. Accommodations available for immunocompromised students
 - iii. Free access to Khan Academy Test prep materials until Sept 2021
 - b. Starting Jan 2021, MCAT will go back to its full-length and results will be reported in 30 days +
6. Hardship:



Adams House Pre-Health Introductory Meeting
October 18, 2020



adams-medical@hcs.harvard.edu

- a. AAMC Fee Assistance Program has expanded its eligibility guidelines to help more students with financial needs qualify for benefits.
 - i. FAP available to US citizen, nation or lawful permanent resident, refugee/asylee by the US gov, DACA recipients or person awaiting refugee/asylee status approval.
 - ii. In 2020, FAP will be granted to students whose household has a family income that is 400% or less than the 2019 poverty level for that family size.
 - iii. Benefits: MCAT test prep materials, reduced MCAT fee, MSAR