

# Advising the Marginal Applicant to US (MD) Medical Colleges: Student Options and Opportunities

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# What Constitutes Marginal?

- Marginal is a moving target and primarily involves academic performance and MCAT exam scores.
- National and school trends
- Individual applicant profiles

# What Can We Expect for 2011 and Beyond?

- In 2010, approximately 42,700 MD applicants (inclusive of 11,000 re-applicants) for 18,665 seats.
- 44% of all MD applicants admitted.
- U.S. MD schools (approx 130) received 580,304 applications, an average of 14 per applicant.

# Current GPA and MCAT Trends: Have We Found the Top of the Bell?

- Science GPA Slightly  than 3.6
- Non-Science GPA 3.75
- Cumulative Overall GPA 3.67
- Average MCAT Score 29.3

*All driven by applicant pool – not cutoffs*

# What Else Could Contribute to a Marginal Standing?

- Limited or narrow clinical exposure
- Weak letters or Prehealth Committee Appraisal
- Lack of overall preparedness to enter health profession (i.e., lack of maturity, understanding of realities of medicine, lack of knowledge of current issues)

# Communicating Difficult Information

“The genius of communication is the ability to be totally honest and totally kind at the same time.” James Powell

Personal philosophy? Let them leave with *something* - some option(s), some resources, some plan.

# Consider Further Enhancement – Post-Bacs

- Post-Baccalaureate : “After the Degree”
- Various Types –
  - ✓ career changer
  - ✓ underrepresented applicants
  - ✓ academic record enhancer
- Graduate/Undergraduate
- Structured/Non Structured - Formal/Informal
- Masters, Certificate, & Non-Certificate

# **Funny Story About Post-Bacs...**

**Not “Post-Bachelorette Programs”**

**Usage of term so common that it made it’s way into the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) glossary of post-bac terms.**



# What Else?



- Numerous (100+) one to two year programs.
- Heavy science oriented focus. May take classes with first year med students (highly structured programs).
- Many offer interview for MD admission with GPA (e.g., 3.5).

# Post-bacs are Best Suited for...

- Those applicants that show evidence of **\*increased\*** focus, commitment, academic achievement as undergraduates.
- Those that could benefit from some additional mentoring, added time to develop professionally, and to further mature personally.

# Key Questions for Applicants

- What will be different now?
- How do I know this?
- What evidence do I have that I can compete in/succeed in a graduate program?
- If I do not ultimately gain admission to an MD program what are my alternative career goals?
- Do I need MCAT prep work in particular?

# Post-Bac Resources

Go to:

<http://services.aamc.org/postbac/>

Search by Special Program Focus

Consider best match – Undergrad or Grad

Go to:

[http://www.naahp.org/resources\\_postbacMain.htm](http://www.naahp.org/resources_postbacMain.htm) - For articles, glossary, FAQs, etc.

# A Parallel Medical Degree

- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)
  - ✓ Tremendous growth in last decade
  - ✓ Addresses physician shortage (2020)
- Residency choices (DO and MD)
- International recognition (e.g., Ontario, Doctors Without Borders, full practice rights in 50 countries)

# What are the Differences?

- Philosophy: the body's capacity to heal & emphasis on musculoskeletal basis of illness and healing
- Another tool in the physician toolbox (OMM)
- Slightly more “forgiving” & non-traditional applicants
- Last grade stands (MD schools will average)

# More Differences

- Science GPA 3.3+
- Non-Science GPA 3.5
- Cumulative Overall GPA 3.4
- Average MCAT Score 25+

# What are the Similarities?

- Identical undergrad pre-req courses
- MCAT exam
- Clinical exposure
- Research
- Letters of recommendation
- Interviews
- Length of training
- Basic science curriculum (Years 1 & 2)
- Clinical rotations (Years 3 & 4)



# More Similarities

- Required licensing exams
- Residency matches
- Salary (Federal Loan Eligibility & Repayment)
- Diagnosing
- Prescribing
- Compassion
- Competence
- Critical thinking
- Leadership...

# Bottom Line



- A doctor is a doctor is a doctor is a doctor
- Competencies are *individual* based
- Issues?
  - ✓ Misconceptions, myths, pressure from external sources, concern about prestige, status

# Offshore and International MD Programs



- Offshore considered predominantly Caribbean and Mexico
  - ✓ Most (not all) founded to accommodate those wishing to practice in the US but who believed they were not competitive to apply (never applied) or did apply & were rejected.
- International includes:  
United Kingdom, Eastern Europe, Middle East, Australia, etc.

# Offshore Schools - Important Considerations

- Caliber of the school (WIDE variability)
  - ✓ Of approximately 70 schools offshore, we suggest 4+.
- Length of time and reputation of graduating large numbers of well trained students who score competitively on licensing exams, and therefore are qualified for US residency matches.
- States allowing clinical rotations (NY, NJ, FL, CA)

# Important Considerations, (continued )

- Tuition and federal loan availability
- Environmental conditions
- Distance from support networks
- Cultural differences (e.g., food, amenities)
- Overall health
- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Resourcefulness

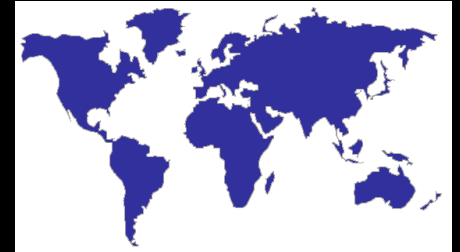
# Important Considerations, (continued)

- Is the MCAT/interview a consideration?
- Attrition rates can be high!

# Being Competitive - Offshore

- Most reputable schools parallel admission statistics of US DO schools.
- Approx 3.3 GPA & mid 20s and higher MCAT .  
Strong correlation established between MCAT performance and pass rates on USMLE.
- Mid 20s MCAT is recommended for attendance.  
Strong relationship between MCATs in low 20s and failing USMLE (2x-3x more likely)

# International Schools



- Mostly designed for citizens
- Different educational structure (e.g., directly from high school)
- Have to accept US applicants
- Have to have affiliations and steps established so grads are eligible for US licensure (e.g., WHO listing).
- Language and other cultural considerations
- TOP schools highly competitive – Sackler, Royal College of Surgeons



# Other Options



- Provisionally accredited US MD Schools.
- Newer US MD schools include:
  - ✓ The Commonwealth - PA (2010)
  - ✓ Beaumont – CA (2011)
  - ✓ Virginia Tech (2011)
  - ✓ Hofstra – NY (2011)
  - ✓ Florida Atlantic (2012)
- Small class size (e.g., 40-60)
- Moderate *initial* requirements (3.0 GPA 24 MCAT)

# Other Health Professions

- Dentistry
- Podiatry
- Chiropractic
- Optometry
- Physician assistant
- The allied professions (e.g., OT, nuclear medical technology, nursing)



# Other Health Professions – Resources

Explore Health Careers

<http://explorehealthcareers.org>

NY Career Zone (83)

<http://NYCareerZone.org>

*300 Ways to Put Your Talent to Work in a  
Health Profession* - National Health Council

# Resources for Academic Advisors

Prehealth advisors at own institution or neighboring

NAAHP Advisors

<http://www.naahp.org/advisors.htm>

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)

– [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)

*Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)*

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