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## ***New Practitioners Network Interview Techniques for Both Sides of the Fence***

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The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Resident Matching Program (the “Match”) provides an orderly process to help applicants obtain positions in residency programs of their choice as well as help programs obtain applicants of their choice. For this year’s residency application cycle, rank lists are due to the National Matching Service website by March 6, 2018 and Phase I results will be released on March 20, 2018.<sup>1</sup> With post-graduate training becoming more competitive each year, interviews are an integral part of ensuring that prospective residents are paired with appropriate programs and vice versa. In order to optimize the chances of finding the right fit, this article highlights important concepts on how to navigate an interview from the perspective of a candidate and residency program.

### **For Residency Candidates**

- **Do your research.** Review basic information about the program by looking at their website, brochures, and other relevant sources. This step will also help you formulate specific, open-ended questions to ask during your interview.
- **Know your resume.** Basically, you should “study” your CV because anything on it is fair game for questions! This includes reviewing rotation experiences, specific presentations, and job positions.
- **Practice answering interview questions.** Examples of interview questions can be found on the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) and ASHP websites.<sup>2,3</sup> Many programs will focus on behavioral interviews with situational questions. Tread cautiously as there is typically a “question behind the question” (i.e. the actual purpose of the question that you’re being asked). For example, if you are asked to describe a time you bumped heads with a peer, you are most likely being assessed on your communication skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution approach. Take time to practice your responses, whether it is writing down talking points or running through mock interviews with peers or mentors.
- **What (and what not) to wear.** Look professional and be comfortable. This most likely includes a suit, closed toed shoes, and neutral colors. You never want to be remembered for wearing inappropriate attire.
- **Communication is key.** Speak clearly and use appropriate language. It is important to be aware of your non-verbal communication; make eye contact and have a firm handshake. Lunch will likely be with current residents and although this may seem casual, it is still a part of the formal interview process so continue to maintain professionalism with both residents and other applicants.
- **Thank everyone.** Hosting an interview is a time and labor intensive process that is worked into the normal workflow of pharmacy staff members’ schedules. Sincerely thank individuals at the end of each interview

and follow up with written messages.

## For Residency Interviewers

- Prepare your questions. Look internally to see what attributes and qualities you value most in your current residents and compile a list of required traits. Identify what you want to accomplish in your workplace and construct relevant questions around these criteria.
- Reduce Stress. Do you work well under extreme stress? The answer to this question is most likely no! Help your interviewees feel more comfortable by providing an itinerary, the names of people they will be meeting during the interview, and information they should be prepared to discuss throughout the day.
- Welcome others. Invite your colleagues to host different parts of the interview. This will help candidates to get an idea of the various different roles of a pharmacist at your institution. Additionally, this will provide multiple checks in assessing if a candidate is a good fit for the program.
- Assess potential. Think beyond the length of the program. Will this candidate be able to perform well as the world of pharmacy continues to evolve? Will they advance the profession of pharmacy?
- Cultural fit. In a nutshell, ask yourself if the candidate will be compatible with other employees including pharmacy members, nurses, and physicians. Think about if an individual's goals align with the mission of the department as a whole.
- Sell the job. Keep in mind that interviews are a mutual screening process. Applicants are more than likely meeting with several programs and will have tough decisions to make before Match Day. If you are confident in a candidate, make sure you highlight the value they will get from choosing your program over others.

Keep in mind that interviews are a mutual screening process and both parties should be exchanging thoughts and questions. As time goes on and you participate in more interviews, your answers and narratives may change, but stay true what is important to you. Ultimately, as stressful as interviews can be, take time to enjoy meeting new people and visiting different practice sites (after all, these could be your future colleagues)!

## References

1. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Resident Matching Program, National Matching Services. Schedule of Dates. <https://www.natmatch.com/ashprmp/aboutdates.html> (accessed 2018 Jan 4).
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3. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists - Connect. Interview Questions with Follow Ups. <http://connect.ashp.org/blogs/sara-white/2014/02/23/interview-questions-with-follow-ups?ssopc=1> (accessed 2018 Jan 4).

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