Don’t eat the powdered sugar doughnuts!
And other tips on interviewing...

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Beginning: Your Personal Statement

• What are your:
  – Themes
  – Stories
  – Passions

• What distinguishes you?
  – “Hooks”
    – When your name comes up in their match meeting, what will they remember about you?

• Be nice on phone and email
Shopping and Grooming

- Look the part!
- Smell the part!
- BE the part!

...the dignified young surgery professional

Safe vs risky distractions
Shopping and Grooming

Everyone:

– Solid colors or muted patterns
– Deodorant a must; fragrance none or light
– Glasses: business-like
– Jewelry: business watch, wedding band, simple earrings (ladies)
– No symbols or visible tattoos, nails groomed

Rowland & Lang, 2007
Shopping and Grooming

Gentlemen:

– Hair: Conservative, trimmed
– Business suit
– Shirt: L/S, white or blue, not button-down collar
– Tie: tied with dimple
– Blend: sox/pants, belt/shoes
– Shoes: tied, leather
Shopping and Grooming

Ladies

- Pants/skirt: latter conservative length (no thighs)
- Blouse: avoid high collar, ruffles, cleavage
- Shoes: pumps w low heel, comfortable, hose
- Make-up: natural, light/clear nail polish
- Hair: Shoulder length or above, “spray strays”
Practice

- Faculty
- Friends
- Family
- Especially if there are tough subjects
Packing

- Small sewing kit
- Tide® stick
- Double-sided sticky tape
- Hotels have irons and ironing boards
- Ladies: extra pair of hose in purse
The Night Before – Meeting the Residents

• Unsure about dress? Call Prog Coordinator
  – Err on the side of formal, shed to casual

• Drinking? Limit is one – beer or wine
  – Some programs don’t offer alcohol

• Not drinking? Don’t make others wrong

• Good table manners
Interview Day

• Everyone has a say!
• Be nice to fellow applicants: you’ll see them a lot
• Don’t eat the powdered sugar, or the jelly-filled, doughnuts!
Interview Day

• Nametag
  – Right side, not under lapel, straight, legible

• Handshake
  – Webspace to webspace, firm, eye contact, SMILE
Interview Day

• Body language
  – At a table
  – Across or next to a desk
  – Chair across from chair
Interview Day

• The Chair
  – Butt back, sit up, keep hands visible
  – Don’t slouch, lean too far back, forward or side
    • Balance: too relaxed VS you want to jump out of your chair

• What to do with chair arms & your arms:
  – If chair arms wide, elbow on one or none
  – If narrow, elbow on one
Interview Day

• Swivels and wheels: don’t

• Legs and feet
  – Gentlemen: feet on floor or cross ankle on knee
  – Ladies: Cross at ankles (or knees if wearing pants or a skirt that won’t ride up)
Interview Day

- Purses, folios: set to the side or down
- CVs: ask Prog Coordinator if unsure
  - Updated info to ERAS & call Prog Coordinator
  - Artwork?
Interview Day

• Speech
  – High-pitched speech
  – Fast-paced speech
  – Accents: US regional and international
    • If you have one, ask a friend who doesn’t to listen to you, tell you what words might be said more clearly, and practice
  – Soft speech
  – “So” is this year’s “Like”
    • Practice with friends, ask them to stop you at “So”, “Um”, or “like”
  – Pauses vs running on: both beginning & end of questions, learn to stop
The Friendly Interview

- Judgments in first few seconds
- The low-ball opening: “Tell me about yourself”
- What the interviewer knows (may not be much or entire file)
- Interviewers usually have agendas/things they want to ask
- Keep your answers short, answer the question, STOP
- Use your (2-3) stories and themes from your PS to illustrate your qualities (e.g., “I’m a hard worker” VS a story about being a hard worker)
The Friendly Interview

• Short, concise answers about your research

• Answers to common questions, know how to answer a question about your weaknesses/challenges you’ve faced/a time when you overcame failure, etc.

• If you’re caught off guard:
  – Pause. “That’s a great question.” Pause...answer.
The Friendly Interview

If it’s in your application, you should be able to talk about it
The Stress Interview

- May involve a panel
- Rapid-fire questions
- Comments to stress, make you sweat, doubt your answers

Whether this actually validly simulates the stress of a hypotensive trauma patient at 2 am is questionable, however...
The Stress Interview

- Zen. 10 deep breaths as you walk in.
- Remember handshake, eye contact, smile.
- Try to control pace.
  - Don’t get into stress snowball
  - Pause, eye contact
- “I don’t know” (and the answer is ALWAYS “I don’t know” if you don’t) doesn’t mean an unsuccessful interview (au contraire…)
- Likewise, neither are answers YOU aren’t satisfied with.
  - E.g., minute anatomy questions, carving an ear out of a bar of soap
  - Maintain your equanimity and move on
The Illegal Interview

• Some interviewing faculty are just uninformed
• Interest in spouse fair in couples matches
• Otherwise, unless YOU bring them up...questions about:
  – Marital status or intentions
  – Intentions for family (now or in the future)
  – Age
  – Sexual orientation
  – Abilities as they relate to your gender
  – Where you are going to rank them
  – Where else you are interviewing

…are OFF LIMITS. BUT THEY STILL GET ASKED!
The Illegal Interview

• You have to have an answer...
• Informing interviewer about rules not a good idea
• A smile and a non-committal answer, repeated as often as necessary
  – Be a good politician
• You CAN answer questions you are comfortable with
  – E.g., you have small children and you want them to know
• But once YOU open the door you can’t go back.
  – Indicating how you are going to rank a program can come back to bite you…
Questions From You

• Review program webpage the night before
• Don’t pubmed your interviewers
• Ask multiple interviewers/residents same Qs
  – Different people may have different answers
• OK to ask about environment for women
  – Especially if not many there
Thank You Notes

- If they say don’t, don’t
- Keep them short
- Must to PD, Chair, PC
- Nice to interviewers
- OK to email but beware cut-and-paste
  - Bad form mentioning UCLA to UCSF chair
  - Bad form sending same note to all interviewers (they all send them to PC)
Bibliography


• *barbara.pettitt@emory.edu* for cc this Ppt
Questions?