

## **Video 1: What Goes on in a Medical School Application - Primary Application Process**

Medical student Tony Chang will be discussing the application process for medical school. This video will focus on the primary application process, while briefly touching on secondaries and the interview season.

### Determining the Application Service

The first step in applying to medical schools is to decide whether you want to apply to allopathic (MD) programs, osteopathic (DO) programs, or both. Either track will train you to become a physician, but there are some slight differences in the curriculum and application process.

If you are applying to an MD program, you will use the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS). If you are applying to a DO program, you will use the American Association of Colleges for Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS). Additionally, if you are applying to medical schools in the state of Texas, they use their own service known as the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS). Knowing which programs you would like to apply to will direct which application service you will use.

### Primary Application Components

There are many components that are involved in the primary medical school application.

- 1. GPA:** Medical schools look at your Science GPA, also known as your BCPM (biology, chemistry, physics, and math GPA). They will look at your All Other GPA, which includes every other class you have taken that is not BCPM. Then, they will compile everything you have taken into a total GPA (cumulative GPA). The average GPA for an MD program is about 3.7, but there is a lot of variability. For DO programs, the average GPA is about a 3.54, and again there is also a lot of variability.
- 2. MCAT:** This is an exam that all medical students take for the admissions process. For reference, the scale of the exam runs from 472-528 with a 50th percentile score of 500. For DO programs, the average is performing around the 60th percentile or about a 503-504. For MD programs, the median is about 85th percentile or 511-512. There is a lot of variability in these as well and can depend on the schools you are applying to.

The MCAT consists of four sections. The first one is the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems, which is heavy in physics and chemistry. The second is the Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems. Next is the Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills section, also known as CARS, which focuses on reading and reading comprehension. The last section is the Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section, which is why some medical programs would advise you to take a psychology, sociology, or anthropology class to prepare for this section.

- 3. Letters of Recommendation (LOR):** There is a difference between MD and DO programs when it comes to submitting letters of recommendation. For example, the DO program requires that you have a letter from a physician, either an MD or a DO. Different schools require a different number of letters. For example, some schools may require 2 letters, while others may require 3. One big distinction is that when submitting letters of recommendation through the DO service, you do not choose which schools receive which letter. This means that every letter you choose to submit will be sent to every school. This is different than the MD service, where you can have multiple letters in the AMCAS service, but you can pick and choose which letters will go to different schools. AMCAS does not require a letter from a physician, but some schools specifically ask for it for an MD program. Again, different schools have different letter requirements typically ranging from 3-5 letters.
- 4. Personal Statement:** This is a major component of your application. This statement is 5,300 characters of why you chose medicine. If you're applying to a DO program specifically, it will entail why you chose osteopathic medicine. In general, you want to discuss activities or experiences that led you to medicine. You want to try not to regurgitate your resume because the admissions committee will see your activities in your application anyway. This is the time for you to discuss your own narrative and what really drove you to medicine.
- 5. Activities:** Both MD and DO schools will ask about your activities, which are all things you did in undergrad or during your gap years. For DO programs, there is no limit to how many activities you can list, and you have 600 characters each to describe these activities. You can also differentiate between experiences and achievements. For MD programs, you have a limit of 15 activities and 700 characters each to describe them. You can also pick up to 3 most meaningful activities, which you can spend another 1,325 characters describing why these activities were more meaningful than some of the others.

When applying to medical school, you are going to want to include your volunteering experiences and clinical experiences. Volunteering can include clinical volunteering - such as at a hospital or free clinic - but can and should also include nonclinical service, such as at a food pantry or voter registration drives. Clinical experience can involve shadowing - or talking to doctors and learning more about their experiences - as well as working in a clinical setting. Popular jobs include medical scribes, medical assistants, and emergency room technicians.

Another component of your application is research. Compared to your GPA, MCAT, volunteering, and clinical experiences which are required for your application, research is

actually optional. Although many applicants do research, it is not a requirement but is worth discussing in your activities section.

- 6. Situational Judgement Test (SJT):** This component of the application is a bit newer and not all schools use this yet. There are two major services that are providing these tests: CASPER and AAMC PREview. For a situational judgment test, they will usually give you a question or scenario and ask you how would you approach this problem. For CASPER, half of your responses will be typed out and the other half will be video-based. For PREview, the questions are going to be multiple choice.

### Secondary Applications

After a school receives and processes your primary application, they are going to filter your application based on their criteria. If you fit into their criteria, they are going to send you a secondary application. While your primary application included your personal statement and activities completed, the secondary application is going to have school-specific content and questions for you to answer. You are going to tailor your responses to that school. They are using this as a way to see if you really fit into their curriculum or their mission as a medical school. The secondary applications may also involve you submitting some forms, including your transcripts or some documentation, especially if you are claiming in-state tuition.

Now that you have submitted your primary application and have written all of your essays for your secondary application, at this point, you are waiting to hear back from schools to get an invitation to interview. Interviews will be discussed in a subsequent video. Thanks for watching!