

# How to start preparing for Medical School now.

**Declare a major.** Medical schools require you to have a bachelors degree. Pre-med is not a major and will not qualify for a degree. Declare a major now so you can start to properly prepare. A good major is something that really interests you. As long as you take the recommended courses, any major is ok. But often students find it convenient to major in one of the sciences since you will take many science courses as preparation for medical school.

**Get good grades!** This is the most important thing you need to do right now.

The average GPA of an entering student in the US in 2004 was 3.62

Very few students get in with less than a 3.0

**Take the recommended courses** (The following are courses suggested by the Uof MN)

- Biology with lab (1 semester)
- Chemistry with lab (1 semester)
- Life sciences, biochemistry, chemistry, physics (4 semester)
  - o At least 2 upper level courses
- Upper level humanities or social sciences with writing requirement (1 semester)
- Cannot use AP credit, if you have AP credit you should take an upper level course to fulfill the semester requirements
- Recommended courses
  - o Biochemistry
  - o Ethics
  - o Genetics
  - o Psychology
  - o Statistics
  - o Foreign language
  - o Social and behavioral sciences and humanities
  - o Seminar-type courses involving small group discussions
  - o Independent learning courses

**MCAT – Score well on the MCAT.** The best preparation will be doing well in your classes. Consider a MCAT prep class. Maximum score is a 45. Average in the country is a 24. A good score is 30 or above. Average score of students who got into medical school was 29.9. Plan ahead to take this in the spring of the year you will apply (April or May MCAT, June July apply, fall to winter interview, start Med school the next summer)

Leave plenty of time in your schedule to study for the MCAT.

## **Letters of recommendation**

Letters of recommendation from faculty and others who know you well (lab supervisor, supervisor from volunteer activity etc) are a very important part of your application. Spend some time getting to know the faculty who teach your classes: Attend office hours, take their section of a lab course, work in a faculty members lab, start this process now, don't wait until the end when you may struggle to find someone who knows you well enough to write a good letter. Ask faculty members early. Good letters take time to write.

## **Other important qualities of a good candidate**

- Commitment to improving the human condition
- Professional conduct
- Outstanding interpersonal skills
- Dedication to lifelong learning

These things are demonstrated by the things you do outside of the classroom. A long term commitment to an activity is better than a bunch of short ones. Can include:

- explored world of medicine
  - o Work as nursing assistant, EMT
  - o Volunteer in a hospital, nursing home
  - o Mission trips
- Research in a laboratory
- Volunteer in the community
- Familiarity to family practice in rural or native American populations (UMD)

## **Admissions statistics for University of Minnesota Medical schools**

(2008-2009 class):

Twin cities: 281 students were accepted out of 3212 applicants (8.7%)

UMD: 80 students were accepted out of 1413 applicants (5.7%)

## **For more information:**

Join the pre-med club, <http://www.d.umn.edu/biology/undergraduate/Pre-MedClub.htm>

The career center has counselors available to talk with you about applying to medical school and has many books and resources on alternative careers in healthcare if you should decide on trying something different: <http://careers.d.umn.edu/>

## **Think about alternatives:**

Getting into medical school is a very competitive process and there isn't space for every qualified student. Spend some time thinking of other career options you might like to consider if medical school does not work out. The career center has great resources.