

MD/MBA Futures

MD/MBA in Health Management Program, Tufts University School of Medicine

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Are You Just Racking Up Degrees? Questions Encountered on the MD/MBA Interview Trail

Amay Parikh, MD/MBA '05

The MBA degree puts us in a distinct class of applicants compared to our colleagues and competitors. Even with the dreaded extra course work, the special attention and treatment we received on the interview trail has helped to appease our weary eyes. Fourth year medical students are provided with a list of possible interview questions and questions to ask residency programs. However, as MBA students we are not given that same luxury. To that end, I have collected some questions that myself and other MD/MBA students have received on the interview trail for residency.

Tell me about the MBA curriculum. How is the curriculum structured to allow for completion of both degrees in 4 years?

This question is usually used to start an open dialogue about the MBA program. The interviewer is trying to assess your knowledge about the program. In some instances, the interviewer may also have an MBA (only to be revealed later) and is trying to compare his/her program to the Tufts MD/MBA. Emphasize the courses that are common to all MBA programs: accounting, finance, organizational behavior. Especially stress what makes the MBA in Healthcare Management unique: service sector oriented courses and the healthcare, non-profit/not-for-profit theme of the courses. This is also a good opportunity to note that this is a “combined” program rather than a “dual-degree” program.

Why did you decide to get an MBA?

This is a personal question. It would be great if you can tie the MBA into a lifetime theme. I would discourage you from saying that you wanted extra letters after your name or that you would like to be your interviewer’s boss one day.

Are you just racking up degrees? What is next? A JD? A MPH?

Granted, a JD and MPH in addition to an MD, MBA would be an impressive array of degrees (and letters), the focus of this question is the same as the last: why are you getting the degree?

I don’t see how the MBA fits together with the MD. With one you are trying to help people and the other you are trying to take their money. How do you plan on using your MBA?

This is just another way of asking “Why the MBA?” This question focuses on how you plan to integrate the two degrees in the future. These statements also point to some supposed “ethical dilemma” of having both degrees. Either as someone who can communicate with both the administrative groups and the clinical groups of the hospital OR as someone who will tackle the business aspects of medicine; your combined degree is a positive attribute that gives you added perspective in any problem you might encounter. The more perspectives one has, the better he/she can solve problems efficiently and effectively.

Talk about an ethical dilemma you have encountered during medical school and discuss it.

This is an interesting question. Find an example in which the business and clinical perspectives come into conflict. How you resolved this conflict will be extremely telling to the interviewer. Obviously, any solution should maximize patient care and comfort.

How would you fix the healthcare system?

If you have an answer to this question that can be explained in simple, clear language in 2 minutes or less, perhaps you should try to answer this one. Otherwise, first acknowledge the large scope of this question. Then you can talk about one aspect of the healthcare system. Stuart Altman’s, Stanley Hochberg, or Jon Chilingierian’s class should provide you with ample material. **Some clinicians may take the stance that they are uncorrupted by the business aspects of healthcare.**

Depending on the tone of this statement, the interviewer may be playing devil’s advocate or may truly hold to this belief. Generally, interviewers have positive attitudes about the MBA, however if you do meet resistance stick to your reasons for obtaining the degree. There are many aspects to the MBA in Healthcare Management that are attractive to these “uncorrupted” clinicians, such as quality and patient safety.

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John M. Ludden, MD, FACPE

Norman S. Stearns MD Professor of Health Management



A few weeks ago a hospital physician was overheard discussing his practice. He said, in essence, that he only wanted to practice and let the accounting department take care of "the business." In my view, that would mean that he was working for the accounting department! For physicians to command the direction and implementation of medicine in the 21st Century, they will need the tools of management discipline. This imperative is being recognized.

In the space of a very few years, it has become evident that the health care industry and the practice of medicine needs management expertise. Organizing and managing a practice, designing a research center, bringing a new product to market, navigating the legal and ethical shoals all benefit from specialized training. It is clear that the advancement of medical education itself can and

will benefit from the creativity and focus of those who can design, develop, and market innovations in curriculum content and delivery. The growth of technology in medical education mirrors the importance of information systems in medical practice.

Increasingly, an educational innovation requires a "business plan," investment in education requires an ROI, and implementation of changes in curriculum require organizational skills. While such changes are also "about the money," it is clear that money is not enough. Changes in medical education are changes in how the business of education works and such changes produce predictable stresses that can be understood and managed.

This year, as part of their Health Management Seminar, students are pursuing a number of team oriented, client centered projects. More than a third of these projects are concerned with some aspect of medical education itself. Two of these projects concern the development of opportunities for the general medical students to gain elective exposure to basic management skills and concepts. Physicians also need career-long just-in-time training in specific aspects of management in medical practice, so some of the changes in medical management education will be designed to fit the stages of physician careers.

These educational innovations, and the business plans that they entail, do not simply spring from the interests of Tufts MD/MBA students. They are a response to the growing understanding of the importance of management discipline in medical education and in the complicated business of organizing and growing the overall business of medicine. Further, the Tufts MD/MBA student Alliance Consulting endeavor has become a developing resource for business analysis and development within the local medical community.

Every opportunity to demonstrate the value of good management to our colleagues in medicine is also an opportunity to teach. And these opportunities are increasing. Our colleagues in other schools are also finding a strong demand for consultation and for education among the general medical community. Physicians can no longer practice high quality medicine effectively or efficiently without attention to their organization, finances, and relationships.

MD/MBA 2005 Residencies

Saurin Bhatt, Emergency Medicine, NY Hospital-Queens/Cornell Medical College, Flushing, NY

Melissa Crocker, Pediatrics, Children's National Medical Center, Washington, DC

Benjamin Doucette, Career in Business

Marina Feldman, Transitional, Caritas Carney Hospital, Boston, MA; Diagnostic Radiology, Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY

Druce Fu, Emergency Medicine, Maricopa Medical Center Program, Phoenix, AZ

Lawrence Genen, Surgery Preliminary, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA

Jennifer Lai, Medicine/Primary Care, New York Presbyterian Hospital – Columbia, New York, NY

Christopher Lee, Orthopaedic Surgery, Tufts-New England Medical Center, Boston, MA

Lisa Levine, Transitional, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Newton Lower Falls, MA; Anesthesiology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA

Amay Parikh, Internal Medicine, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson, Piscataway, NJ

Louis Reines, General Surgery, University of Connecticut Program, Farmington, CT

Oliver Szeto, Obstetrics/Gynecology, University of Virginia Medical Center, Charlottesville, VA

Vijay Vaidya, Internal Medicine, UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA

Alexander van der Ven, Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Miami – Jackson Memorial Medical Center, Miami, FL

Praneeth Vemulapalli, Urology, SUNY – Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY

Networking in the Digital Age

Amay Parikh, MD/MBA '05

As MBAs we have learned the importance of networking. Oftentimes just knowing the right people can open doors of opportunity. In a recent CareerJournal (a publication of the Wall Street Journal) article, journalist Eileen Gunn offers that an emerging trend is the use of online-networking services. These sites are based on the theory of "six degrees of separation": the idea that everyone is connected to everyone else by a maximum of 6 people. While most members join a networking site at someone else's invitation, you also can sign up on your own. You then "look for" members you already know while inviting your friends or colleagues to join, until you form a trackable, searchable network of connections. The idea is to use your own connections with your extended circle to gain helpful career or business information. For example, you might learn that a friend's college buddy has a co-worker who knows someone at a company that has a job opening which interests you.

Some of the more popular networking websites include LinkedIn, Friendster, Spoke, and Ryze. These websites tend to be dominated by tech-savvy members; we have seen enough examples to know that medical professionals are not early adopters of new technology. To interact with our business colleagues though, we must continue to innovate when our clinical colleagues stick with the status quo. Networking and the online-networks do not come with any guarantees. Therefore, you should treat them as a tool to advertise yourself, to look for job opportunities, or to stimulate new interactions with people in similar or different fields.

Some Business-related Online-Networking Sites are:

LinkedIn - All types of professionals.

EntreMate - Entrepreneurs seeking partners.

ItsNotWhatYouKnow - Business professionals, and students and alumni groups.

Ryze - All types of professionals.

Spoke - Sales pros, managers and execs in technology, manufacturing, investment and professional services.

Soon we hope to start an online network of Tufts MD-MBA students and graduates. This should prove useful for those entering the business world and also those continuing clinical training.

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Visit the MD/MBA Website:

www.tufts.edu/med/mdmba/index.html

2005 MD/MBA Alumni Panel

The 5th annual MD/MBA Alumni Career Forum was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2005. Three combined program graduates talked about their professional experiences and answered questions from current MD/MBA students over dinner.

The session began with a brief introduction by each of the speakers. Dennis McCoy, Jr., MD, MBA '00 entered the Program with several years of professional business experience. After graduating, he spent three years as an analyst at Hambrecht & Quist Capital Management, a fund that invests money for public companies and venture capitalists. For the past 18 months Dennis has been a venture capitalist involved in the start-up of a biotechnology company.

Joseph Scaramozza, MD, MBA, '00 worked in corporate finance before pursuing his degree. He completed a residency in Pediatrics at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, MA and has since joined a private practice. His love of clinical care coupled with the business training he received has helped him in his practice by being able to bring efficiency to his delivery of care to his patients.

After graduating, Jason Akus, MD, MBA '01 secured an internship with Hambrecht & Quist Capital Management and stayed on when he was offered a permanent position as a healthcare analyst. One venture of the company is the raising of money from investors to fund clinical trials for new drugs. Jason's combined training in

medicine and business has allowed him to be a part of the success behind bringing new drugs to the market.

The audience of 1st and 2nd year as well as some 4th year students asked the panelists a variety of questions including whether or not to go on to a residency, and the relevance of the combined degree to their current positions. Although all three alumni have chosen different niches, all agreed that students should follow their own hearts when contemplating their lives post-graduation. All three believed that the combination of medical and business training has been worthwhile.

Are You Just Racking Up Degrees?

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Here are some additional questions that arose during interviews. Answers to these will be based on your own personal experiences.

How do you feel the MBA makes you different from a traditional medical student?

Do you think the MBA has distracted you from your medical education?

Do you plan on focusing more on the administrative side of medicine or the clinical?

Do you think getting the MBA was worth it?

Finally, be prepared to discuss a class project or seminar project. Anything mentioned in your CV or application regarding the MBA is fair game. Each interviewer has their own style and may ask you atypical questions. Here are two questions that my classmates

received on their interviews: What do you see being the future of medicine? How would you grade clinical leadership in Boston?

When given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the residency program, make sure to ask about administrative electives or ways in which you can further develop your MBA skills. Often, program directors will admit that they do not have such existing electives in place, but that they can construct one in the future. Also ask about MBA-related clinical research opportunities, as well as for names of faculty conducting such projects.

Above all, make sure you are consistently confident about the combined MD/MBA degree and your experiences. As one interviewer told me, "You are the future of medicine."

Student News

Amit Sura Named Boston Schweitzer Fellow

Amit Sura, MD/MBA '08, has been awarded a Boston Schweitzer Fellowship for 2005-2006. The Fellowship provides Boston and Worcester students with the opportunity to carry out health-related community service projects and public outreach in their local areas.

Arthur Yan Awarded John Woodruff Simpson Fellowship

Arthur Yan, MD/MBA '07, has been awarded a John Woodruff Simpson Fellowship from Amherst College. Established in 1871, the fund provides one fellowship each year in the fields of law, medicine, theology, teaching, and graduate study at Oxford.

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