

Introduction

- the pre-professional health (PPH) committee on campus reviews the credentials of ~150 students each summer who apply to health-related professional schools (typically medical or dental school), and then we provide a written summary of the applicant that is sent to the admissions committees of those schools
- admissions committees will look at these summaries for all applicants who meet local standards for GPA and for MCAT or DAT scores

- most students seem to have prepared appropriately for the committee evaluation, but a significant number of them have not
- I want to make sure that everyone knows what it is they should have done by the time their credentials are evaluated by the PPH committee, and ultimately by the medical and dental school admissions committees
- more general information about getting into a health-related professional school can be obtained from Andrea Abt, 224 WPU, Career Services Office; Andrea is very knowledgeable on this subject and is an experienced advisor

- I'm going to draw attention to 9 variables of importance

1. Grades

- four GPAs can be calculated: overall; in all science/math courses; in major; in courses required for medical/dental school
- GPA of required courses is by far the most important*
- GPA expectations for allopathic medical school typically is 3.6-3.8, greater than 3.8 is excellent
- expectations are about the same for dental school, though for osteopathic medical school GPA expectations are considerably lower
- more A+ grades the better, even though such grades do not affect GPA
- improving trend is noticed
- reason for poor performance in 1-2 semesters should be provided
- major is not relevant; no benefit of having multiple majors
- if didn't do well in early courses, take advanced elective courses to show that you have learned the earlier material

2. "clinical experience"

- that is, interacting with patients, physicians/dentists, nurses, or shadowing
- the more time spent doing this, the better; expect 200+ hours = 4 hours per week for 1+ year
- doing clerical work in an office that happens to be in hospital does not count
- provide PPH committee with information about hours, duties
- should volunteer at UPMC or some other hospital facility, request clinical experience*

3. research

- could be basic or clinical

-PPH committee and admission committees are not concerned about whether you ultimately plan to do research

-strongly recommend research experience in order to find out whether you have experience and ability to figure things out, to work independently; whether you have a good work ethic, are attentive to details, learn well, and interact well with others

get into a laboratory before your credentials are evaluated by the PPH committee

4. personal statement

-only chance to speak directly to PPH Committee since there is no interview with the committee

-main issue: why do you want to go to medical school?

reveal information about yourself not on resume: compassion, ethics, motivation

-prepare it very carefully and keep in mind that you will be judged by it

-get feedback and advice about your statement

-don't worry about providing a unique story; most students have a similar story about a health concern in a friend/family member or self that triggered or reinforced an interest in health care

5. letters of recommendation

-from mentors of meaningful research or clinical experiences, from professors of significant classes who can say more about you than your grade

-must have 5 letters but ask for 6; three should be from science instructors

make sure your teachers get to know you

6. resume

-not limited to one page

include everything that is relevant, especially honors, awards, examples of leadership (e.g., captain of team, officer of fraternity or club), volunteer activities demonstrating that you really want to help people

-provide details about your duties and time spent in volunteer activities, research

7. MD/PhD

don't check box unless you are definitely a candidate for both and foresee the kind of career you will have: physician who is in lab at least 40% of time, whose medical practice is closely associated with lab research

-discuss such a career in personal statement

8. committee rating

-7 categories: Outstanding, Outstanding to Strong, Strong, Strong to Competitive, Competitive; also Recommend with Reservations, Not Recommended

-committee rating is very important in most medical/dental schools (not important for admission but for getting interview)

-historically, students in first three categories almost always get interviews, most gain admission

-MCAT/DAT scores are seldom known to committee and in any case are not considered in evaluation

don't delay clinical, research experiences until after the PPH considers your credentials

9. deadline

-PPH committee begins to meet in June, soon after May deadline

-consider applicants in order in which completed dossier was submitted

advantage in being evaluated relatively early because our letter gets to medical schools early, and they have rolling admissions policy

-don't wait to last minute to prepare personal statement, request letters

-note that there are several important variables that I did not discuss, which are relevant to medical/dental school admissions but not to the PPH committee

-these include developing a good plan of study (i.e., what courses to take and when; when to volunteer, do research, take MCAT/DAT), preparing for interviews, deciding between allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, selecting which medical/dental schools to apply to, preparing for MCAT/DAT exams and deciding when to take them, deciding what to do if you apply but don't get into medical/dental school

-should ask Andrea Abt about these other relevant issues that I did not address