

Preparing Pre-health Professional Students & Advisors for the Multiple Mini-Interviews: Advanced Issues

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MMI Basics

- Medical schools are increasingly using Multiple Mini-Interviews (MMIs)
- Students go to a series of stations, at each of which they receive a prompt of a scenario or question
- Students then have 2 minutes to gather their thoughts before entering the room, and discussing.

MMI scenarios may explore:

- *Ethics and Judgment*
- *Problem-solving capacities*
- *Integrity*
- *Communication skills*
- *Ability to work as part of a team*

MMI Basics

Practice and prep can help

- *Identifying nervous habits*
- *Understanding the basic structure, time limit and number of stations*
- *Doing mock interviews through advisors' office, friends or others*
- *Practicing addressing ethical questions*

Source: New York University School of Medicine. [Multiple Mini-Interview \(MMI\) FAQ](#)

Many students encounter challenges

- Having to “think on their feet”
- Organizing their thoughts
- Questions often have no single “right” answer
- Working with time limits – planning appropriately
- Problems exacerbated by anxiety

Here is a sample question

You are a first-year medical student. A friend in your class tells you that her mother was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She feels overwhelmed and is thinking about dropping out to spend more time with her mother.

– *What would you say?*

Source: [Astroff's Prep for Multiple Mini Interview](#)

Steps in the Ethical Decision-Making Process

1. Gather the facts
2. Define the ethical issues
3. Identify the affected parties (e.g., stakeholders)
4. Identify the consequences
5. Identify the obligations (principles, rights, justice)
6. Consider your character and integrity
7. Think creatively about potential actions
8. Check your gut
9. Decide on the proper ethical action and be prepared to deal with opposing arguments

Gather the Facts

- What questions do you have?
- What else do /would you need to know?
- What is “the story”?
- Who, what, when, where, why?

Bioethical Principles

Provide a useful framework

- Autonomy/Respect for individuals
 - *Informed consent?*
- Beneficence (responsibilities to help others)
- Non-maleficence (“Do no harm”)
- Justice
 - *Social, distributive and procedural justice*

Autonomy/Respect for individuals

Who are the relevant “stakeholders”?

Her Mother

How does her mother feel about it?

- *What is her medical condition?*
 - How acute is it? Does she have symptoms?
 - Perhaps the cancer was located and surgically removed without problem or spread
- *How is she coping? What does she need?*
 - Maybe she lives with her husband and other children/caregivers

Who are the relevant “stakeholders”?

The Student

How does the student feel about it?

- *How long has she felt overwhelmed?*
- *Has it affected her school performance?*

Beneficence:

1. What responsibilities do the stakeholders have to help others – to “do good”?
2. What would the student do exactly if she dropped out?
3. How might it help her mother?

Non-Maleficence/Risks

1. What might be the possible risks/harms that might ensue?
2. What are the disadvantages of dropping out?
 - a) *School performance?*
 - b) *Having to “redo” the year?*
 - c) *Would that cost more money?*

Justice (Social, distributive and procedural Justice):

If the mother has needs, which family members might and should be involved?

What is “fair” within the family?

– *How are decisions made?*

Other considerations

Relevant laws?

Moral intuitions/gut feelings

- *Be aware of your gut feelings*
- *May or may not be optional approach to follow*
- *Any biases?*
- *Important to know*

Brainstorm: Possible actions/solutions

- Are there alternative solutions/options other than the ones that are currently assumed?
- Can a solution be mediated?
- Has the student talked to her mother?
Other family members?
- Could she talk to the dean about possibly taking time off?
- If she is distressed, would psychotherapy help?

Deciding on a course of action

Weighing competing principles

You might consider:

- *Distinguishing primary vs. secondary stakeholders*
- *Short- vs. long-term consequences (risks and benefits)*
- *Magnitude vs. probability of consequences*
 - Which arguments are the most compelling?

Overall approaches to weighing competing principles

Consequentialist (“utilitarian”) approaches

- *e.g., though her mother would welcome her company, she feels that the student dropping out would jeopardize the student’s career too much.*

vs. Rights-based (“deontological” approaches)

- *If her mother has had a long history of chronic medical problems, including alcoholism which has hampered the student’s own life and career for years, and other family members are currently meeting the mother’s needs, the student might feel that she has a right to pursue her own life and career*

Process considerations

- Involve all relevant stakeholders/consider their positions
 - *Consulting with others*
 - *Experts?*
 - *Supervisors?*
- Transparency: A fair process may be more practicable than a universally-agreed fair outcome
- Possible objections to your approach?
- How might someone challenge you?

Remember:

- There may not be a single “right” answer
- What is important is: thinking through the relevant considerations
- Draw on underlying principles
- Consider possible courses of action
 - *Weigh relevant principles*
 - E.g., pros and cons of each
- Drawing on personal experiences can also be helpful, but should not replace logical thinking that addresses the question asked.

Sample Question #2

You are treating a patient with breast cancer. A lump was surgically removed, but she does not want to undergo chemotherapy and radiation therapy as follow-up and instead wants to try complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

– How should you address the issue with her?

Autonomy/Who are the stakeholders?

The patient:

- *Has the right to decide her own treatment*

The physician:

- *Has responsibilities to help her*

Other ethical principles

Benefits:

- *Radiation and chemotherapy might help her*
 - CAM may not be proven to work, but might offer psychological benefits - make her feel she has some control over her fate

Risks:

- *What would happen if she does not pursue radiation or chemotherapy?*
- *What are the odds that her cancer will return?*

Justice:

- *Is she refusing because she lacks insurance?*
 - Fair process: Explain issues to her

Other ethical principles

Gather the facts:

- *Assuming that risks exist in refusing treatment, why does she not want to pursue it?*
- *Does she understand the risks of not pursuing treatment?*
- *Does she have the cognitive capacity to make this decision (vs. has Alzheimers or depression)?*

Brainstorm solutions:

- *Are there family members whom you might speak to?*
- *Spouse? Offspring? Siblings?*

Other points of view?

Sample Question #3

You recommend anti-depressants for a depressed patient, but she says that they are not effective and so does not want to take them. Her mother committed suicide several years ago.

– *What would you do?*

Summary

- Think critically
- Think logically
 - *Can use bioethical principles*
- Bioethical courses, education can help

Other resources available

Columbia University “Bioethics for Premeds” site:
sps.columbia.edu/bioethics/premed

– *Provides free materials – video and print*

Other resources available

Bioethics courses at your institution or elsewhere. Online & face-to-face Bioethics courses, certificate, and masters degree

– *At Columbia or elsewhere*

- Many premed students obtain a bioethics certificate or masters degree:
 - During their gap or glide year,
 - To help with medical school admissions,
 - To help make themselves better doctors.

Questions?

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