So you want to be a doctor?

Dr Jon Arnold
April 2015
Overview

A talk of two halves..

1. Life as a doctor - are you sure, really?

2. Getting into medical school

Apologies...
1. Life as a doctor

But what do you want to really know?
Ask Google...

- are medical students attractive
- are medical students smart
- are medical students registered with the GMC
- are medical students guaranteed a job
- are medical students arrogant

- are doctors rich
- are doctors open on Saturdays
- are doctors happy
- are doctors open on Sunday
- are doctors allowed tattoos
Attractive??? What an odd question!

- Why do you want to do medicine?
  - Cure the sick?
  - Please your parents?
  - Dunno
  - Because you’re predicted AAA
  - Good long term prospects
  - Status
  - You’ve always been fascinated by the way the body works....
  - My dad/mum’s a doctor
  - The money!
  - Can’t think of anything else
Are medics smart?

- You have to be academic to get in...
- ...but other skills/attributes will ultimately determine career progression
  - Stamina
  - Team-working, networking
  - Emotional intelligence, “people skills”
  - Organisational skills
  - Determination
  - Deal with risk and uncertainty
Guaranteed a job?

• Following medical school, yes
• But later, what kind of job and where?
  – GP?
  – What about your partner?
Arrogant?

• Possibly, yes
• What does a stereotypical medical student look/act like?
• “Medical clique”
Will I be rich?

• Basic salary
  – F1 - £22,600
  – F2 - £28,000
  – After c. 5-6 years - £50,000
  – Consultant/GP - £75,000-£100,000

• Comparison
  – Average UK salary - £26,500
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Job title</th>
<th>Average salary*</th>
<th>Change since 2013</th>
<th>Number of jobs **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brokers</td>
<td>£133,677</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chief executives and senior officials</td>
<td>£107,703</td>
<td>-8.4%</td>
<td>69,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aircraft pilots and flight engineers</td>
<td>£90,146</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Marketing and sales directors</td>
<td>£82,962</td>
<td>-2.4%</td>
<td>126,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Information technology and telecommunications directors</td>
<td>£80,215</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Financial institution managers and directors</td>
<td>£78,782</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>83,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Advertising and public relations directors</td>
<td>£77,619</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Financial managers and directors</td>
<td>£76,320</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>238,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Air traffic controllers</td>
<td>£75,416</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Legal professionals</td>
<td>£73,425</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Medical practitioners</td>
<td>£69,463</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
<td>171,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Actuaries, economists and statisticians</td>
<td>£61,749</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Senior police officers</td>
<td>£58,533</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Human resource managers and directors</td>
<td>£56,315</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Research and development managers</td>
<td>£52,882</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>39,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2014 Office for National Statistics salaries survey
Will I be happy?

• The statistics aren’t good
  – Depression: 4 times more likely
  – 1 in 10 doctors have thought about suicide in the past 12 months (control: 1 in 45)
  – Alcoholic liver disease: 3 times more likely
Allowed tattoos?

• Yes, but...
• From day 1 at medical school you are entering a profession
• All professions have standards
• Standards in medicine are very high and are governed by the GMC
• Cheating/plagiarism/criminal offences/tax etc → GMC
The conveyor belt continues...

- 5-6 years at medical school
  - Exams every year
  - Formal assessments at the end of medical school
- Postgraduate exams
- “CV building”
  - Publications
  - Presentations
  - Courses
- Revalidation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New System (Modernising Medical Careers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Programme - 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Registrar (StR) in a hospital specialty: six years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Registrar (StR) in general practice: three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total time in training: 8 years*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total time in training: 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Training may be extended by obtaining an Academic Clinical Fellowship for research. *Due to competition for consultant posts, it may take longer than 8 years to gain Consultant status.*
But...

• I don’t regret my decision:
  – Challenging, rewarding, meaningful work
  – Privilege to be invited into the lives of people from every walk of life
  – Wide variety of possible careers including chances to work abroad
  – Working with like-minded people
  – Medical school is so much fun
  – Ultimately a secure, well paid job that is still valued by society
2. Getting into medical school
Straight-A students forced to go abroad to study medicine as NHS recruits record number of foreign doctors

- UK universities only accept 6,000 medical students a year
- Meanwhile the NHS registers 13,000 new doctors every year
- As a result, a record number of foreign nationals work for NHS

By ANDREW LEVY and LUCY OSBORNE
PUBLISHED: 01.24. 26 August 2013 | UPDATED: 17.08. 26 August 2013

Straight-A students are being turned away from medicine degrees at British universities due to 'bonkers' government quotas, health experts have warned.

The news comes as the NHS recruits foreign doctors in record numbers, many of whom have 'little or no knowledge of British culture'.

Quotas mean that top students are forced to study medicine abroad – and fund their own education – or choose another degree.

For 2013-2014, English universities were allowed to recruit just 6,071 medicine students, even though the General Medical Council registers 13,000 doctors each year and the NHS struggles to recruit enough staff.

An estimated 6,000 newly-registered doctors each year are foreigners who trained overseas. Experts have warned this practice puts lives at risk, because many of these doctors have poor English and are not always familiar with drugs used in this country.

Despite these concerns, thousands of school-leavers who received their A-level results this month have been turned down for medicine. They include Caroline Cieslewicz, 18, who got straight As but was rejected by every university she applied to.

Vanessa Bourne, former chairman of the Patients Association, said: 'The situation is

Rejected: Caroline Cieslewicz, 18, was not accepted by any British universities to study medicine despite A-grades
Applying to medical school

Considering a career in medicine? Confused about the application process?

The section of the website contains information on the application process and other important information including things to consider as an international or disabled applicant.

This is just a small amount of the information that is available and it is likely that you will need to do some more research into what it is like to study medicine.

You may also find it useful to look at our careers pages. These contain information on different career pathways and information on the different specialities. Before you apply to study medicine you need to make sure that this is definitely the right career for you. These pages may help you with that decision.

Use the links on the left hand side for more information on applying to medical school.

Once you have read this information, if you have any further questions please contact us.
Differentiating yourself

• Most candidates do most of the right things
  – A*AA/AAA
  – Relevant work experience

• Things that differ the most:
  – Type of work experience
  – Personal statement
  – Interview performance
A few facts

• Around 21,000 students apply for 8,000 places (source: Medical Schools Council)

• Competition ratios at institutions vary from 3:1 to 11:1

• There are 33 medical schools in the UK. You can apply to 4 medical schools

• 5\textsuperscript{th} choice? Consider alternatives to biomedical sciences
How to pick a medical school

• Eligibility criteria – can I apply?
• Competition ratios – what are my chances?
• Type of course – PBL/traditional etc
• Intercalated degree (e.g. Oxbridge, UCL, Nottingham)
• University/location

• Reputation/ranking is less important than other courses
Academic requirements

• GCSEs: A*/As, particularly in Maths, English & Science subjects

• A-levels: A*AA/AAA
  – including chemistry and biology
  – General studies and critical thinking not included

• Admission tests: UKCAT, BMAT
Admissions test

• BMAT (Oxbridge, Imperial, UCL, Lancaster, Leeds and Brighton & Sussex)
• UKCAT used by all but 2 medical schools (Bristol, Liverpool)
• Designed to:
  – Assess how well you think under pressure, rather than what you know
  – Distinguish between A*AA/AAA candidates
  – Correct for differences between exam boards and ‘coaching’
• How are they used by medical schools? Typically a cut-off of 600/900
• Designed so they’re difficult to prepare for, but…
UKCAT

• Five sections
  – **Verbal Reasoning:** Assesses logical thinking and reasoning about written information.
  – **Quantitative Reasoning:** Assesses ability to solve numerical problems.
  – **Abstract Reasoning:** Assesses the use of convergent and divergent thinking to infer relationships from information.
  – **Decision Analysis:** Assesses the ability, in complex, ambiguous situations, to deal with various forms of information, infer relationships, make informed judgements, and decide on an appropriate response.
  – **Situational Judgement Test:** Assesses judgement regarding situations encountered in the workplace.
BMAT

• Three sections:
  – **Aptitude and Skills**: Generic skills in problem-solving, understanding arguments, data analysis and inference.
  – **Scientific Knowledge and Application**: The ability to apply scientific knowledge from school science and maths up to and including the level of National Curriculum Key Stage 4.
  – **Writing Task**: The ability to select, develop and organise ideas, and to communicate them in writing, concisely and effectively.
Types of course

• Medical schools now vary considerably...
• ...but this may ultimately make little difference to your career
• Know about the course before interview!
• Main types
  – Problem based learning (PBL)
  – Integrated
  – Traditional
Problem based learning

- Weekly learning is based around a clinical case – students decide upon learning objectives themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early clinical exposure</td>
<td>Guinea pig?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving is key to medicine</td>
<td>Evidence of decreased performance in post-graduate exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed learning</td>
<td>May leave gaps in knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinically relevant learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Integrated

- Lectures based around organ systems (physiology + pathology) integrated into clinical attachments

<table>
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<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Link the science with clinical context  
Most courses have early clinical exposure | Lectures continue until the final year  
Some courses may lack depth |
Traditional

• Pure sciences (e.g. biochemistry) taught or the first 2 years. Clinical attachments start around 3rd year

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tried and tested</td>
<td>Later clinical exposure + less in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may feel their knowledge base is strong before seeing patients</td>
<td>Many of the knowledge learnt will be quickly forgotten and of little relevance to clinical practice (e.g. Kreb’s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work experience

• Essential
• The more the better
• ...but difficult to arrange!
• MSC website
Why is work experience is important?

• Being a doctor is not like on TV
  – Convince yourself, and the short-listers that this is the career for you
• Differentiate yourself from other applicants
• Material for the interview
  – Reflect on what you have learnt. Focus on patients, not diseases
  – Keep a reflection diary
Why is it difficult to arrange?

• High demand
• Lack of suitable contacts
• Confidentiality (consider out of area), CRB (may take 2-3 months)
• Cynicism
• [https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/i-want-to-volunteer](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/i-want-to-volunteer)
How much is enough?

• Several months of volunteering or paid employment
• 1-2 weeks of shadowing, preferably in both GP and hospital
What did I do?

• Worked as a health care assistant in a local nursing home
  – Several months, badly paid, very unglamourous

• Volunteered in a hospice
  – Several months, no pay, spending time with day patients

• General practice shadowing
  – One week
Preparing for the interview

• “Why do you want to be a doctor?”
• “Why this medical school?”
• “What did you learn from your work experience?”
• Read up and form an opinion about medical stories in the media
  – E.g. emergency contraception, Diginitas,
  – BBC Health Website
  – There are no right answers – learn to give pros and cons
  – Apply the four principles of medical ethics: autonomy, beneficence (“best-interests”), non-maleficence (“primum non nocere”), justice (distribution of resources)
School rugby plan 'too dangerous'

A government drive to increase participation in rugby within English schools is ill-conceived and risks children getting hurt, doctors warn.

Rugby concussions up 59% in 2013-14

Rugby death first of its kind in NI

Bowel cancers 'spotted too late'

Thousands of people in England are dying from bowel cancer because their disease is not being spotted early enough, warns a charity.

'Tame HIV' used to cure disease

The lives of six boys with a deadly genetic disease have been transformed by a pioneering treatment to correct errors in their DNA, say doctors.

Mindfulness 'option for depression'

Athlete's foot drug may be MS therapy

Fighting dengue fever in Sao Paulo

Ebola 'devastating' in Sierra Leone

Why over 70s should keep fit

Guidelines on wholegrain consumption

Sir Bruce Forsyth on assisted dying

Parkinson's mistaken for drunkenness

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Summary

• Medicine is a very demanding but ultimately rewarding career
• Getting in is tough and requires rigorous planning and preparation
• Relevant work experience/volunteering is essential, not desirable
• Starting preparing for your interview now
Thank you