# Guest Speaker Takebacks

## National President of AMSA

### December 18, 2019

**1) What classes should students in their undergraduate year take if interested in premed?**

A common misconception shared along aspiring premed students is feeling obligated to have a major relating to science. However, there are many doctors and researchers who have majors geared towards a variety of subjects, such as English, Writing, Journalism, and even Spanish. It is important to pick a major that interest you or that you are passionate about, even if it is outside of a science or medical related major.

The key thing is meeting the core classes that is required, such as your basic biology, basic chemistry, and biochemistry. Moreover, if you have a specific college in mind, it is important to do your research in regard to what courses the medical school entails, as prerequisites flux with certain schools. Regardless, make sure that you do what you love in college outside of studying and volunteering for the MCAT, as it is important to know that your majors don’t define you, but rather your experience and distinctiveness that increase your candidacy for med school.

**2) As high school students, many are actively looking for colleges to best prepare us for our future careers. Do certain med schools favor some colleges over others when acquiring new students?**

Right now, you need to look for a school that is good for you. Many people think that “oh if I attend here, I have a better chance in getting into med school” when that is not the case. Medical school is one of those great things that if you study hard in undergrad, do well on the MCAT, and are involved in your community and the college itself, you will be fine regardless of the college you attend.

Med School is very expensive, evident through the mass majority of people who come out in debt from attending. Given this knowledge, you should also take in consideration going to where certain colleges offer scholarships in order to save the money needed for what comes ahead.

Do not get hung up on the fact that “oh I need to get into a top tier school.” While getting into a well-known college or an ivy league school is great, it does not limit or extend your ability to get into med school. Dr. Cochran – the national President of AMSA – attended Waynesburg University, a small college in Pennsylvania that is not well known and has achieved a lot of success in the medical field. So when deciding on a college, make sure that you look for one that interest you rather than the college’s prestige.

**3) How does one come about being successful on the MCAT?**

If you take your basic science classes, you will do well on the MCAT. Although, it is important to note that the more effort you put into those respective classes preparing you for the MCAT, the more likely you are to reap greater success on the test. While preparing, the test itself is also important to consider as well. In fact, a lot of students who do well on the MCAT are very strong in English, due to the test being more comprehension based (being able to decipher what is going on in the passage). So critical analysis is essential to doing well – as you are trying to read something and apply what you have learned - compared to just having outside knowledge by itself.

**4) What advice do you have for high schoolers looking to attend med school?**

As we all have a goal in mind for what should come about for our careers, we tend to get a little ambitious when it comes to the planning. To clarify, ambitious as in hasty or eager to get to med school, which ultimately has aspiring med students caught up in the idea as a whole. While looking in the future is great, we as high schoolers and even as undergrad college students need to recognize the importance of here and now instead of 4-5 years ahead. Med School is an extremely long journey, and many tend to overestimate how long it is in actuality. There will be plenty of time to worry about it in Med School given that the journey can be best described as “a very long marathon rather than a sprint to the finish line.”

We should instead focus on the now – high school – and enjoy the experience that comes with it. Even college, which is in ways a challenge itself, should take more of a priority so that we can be immersed in the experience without being winded by the difficulty of Med School. People would much rather here about our involvement with college and our community instead of having only the MCAT and Med School to talk about and study for. I’m not saying forget about Med School completely, but make sure you are doing other things – preferably fun stuff – while you are in the “now” because Med School isn’t going anywhere while we are in High school.

**5) How do we as students build a strong resume for Med School?**

While Pre-Med is one step, it is important to be aware of the intricacies of Med school so that we can approach Pre-Med the “right way.” The admissions committee of various Med schools surprisingly all share common trends when looking at applicants. While grades and the MCAT score are obvious, there is a sense of flexibility when it comes to reaching the minimum criteria.

The admissions committee do go through and look at every application, even if the scores are below a minimum to a certain extent. However, scores are one thing, as once you have them, they are thrown out the window (shoved, chucked, and flung with very much force) so you need to make sure – especially in undergrad – that you are committed to something. This can range from community service to sticking with a few clubs with strong leadership positions, but make sure that whatever you choose that it helps build and define you as a applicant. In addition, anything that would show that you care about people and are committed to what you do look really good for resumes given that those reflect the traits of the people who come out of Med School. It not only shows that you are going to commit to the long journey of Med School, but that you possess traits like time management, adaptability, and determination prior to it.

This is important because the admissions committee see hundreds of applicants, thus making it harder and harder to stand out among them if you don’t have something that stands out about you. For me as an aspiring doctor, this should prove to be beneficial not just for me, but many future applicants. You should want the competition and the need to be above everyone else when compared among others so it can ultimately push you to make a bigger and more influential impact on the community around you. At the end of the day, the more influential and unique experience that you have to offer, the more likely that they are going to choose you over other applicants.

**6) Where do you draw the line between balance and fun in College?**

College is one of those things where you should always have fun in what you are doing. This pertains to anything, whether it be clubs, sports, or even the classes you chose themselves. While studying is great, that shouldn’t be all that you are doing.

For people like me, this is where it gets hard because you are always looking at the next step and constantly worried about GPA and exams. However, this is where usually the first semester plays a big role because it is an opportunity to figure out what works for you so you can still have fun while finding that balance with school itself.

The balance between responsibility and personal agendas are key to achieving the best experience you can in college, as you don’t want to be burnt out from studying or having too much fun while you GPA drops from not doing anything.

**7) What should we expect from College when comparing it to studying in High school?**

There are people who are really smart and can get away with winging it the first semester or two of College. However, when the classes get hard or the workload gets bigger, those same people in high school who “study right before the test” or “wing the class on pure luck” are going to struggle immensely.

This is why building up those study habits in high school really gives you an advantage over those who don’t have those ethics/ habits because you are more prepared for those hurdles that become challenging for other people.

**8) What should we expect from Med School when comparing it to studying in High school?**

This is easy and quite simple to comprehend. It doesn’t matter how smart you are, you will struggle. A key principle of Med school is if you don’t study then you will fail the test/exam. There is no winging it or studying last minute that you had the option to do in High school because High school doesn’t train future doctors, surgeons, or people that emerge into the medical world.

There are people who are really smart right now, but it is easy to struggle if you don’t take the time to study and/or have those study habits.