

PRACTICE MMI QUESTIONS*

Station 1: Placebo (Ethical Decision Making)

Dr Cheung recommends homeopathic medicines to his patients. There is no scientific evidence or widely accepted theory to suggest that homeopathic medicines work, and Dr Cheung doesn't believe them to. He recommends homeopathic medicine to people with mild and non-specific symptoms such as fatigue, headaches and muscle aches, because he believes that it will do no harm, but will give them reassurance.

Consider the ethical problems that Dr Cheung's behaviour might pose. Discuss these issues with the interviewer.

Station 2: Aspartame (Critical Thinking)

A message that recently appeared on the Web warned readers of the dangers of aspartame (artificial sweetener – Nutrasweet, Equal) as a cause of an epidemic of multiple sclerosis (a progressive chronic disease of the nervous system) and systemic lupus (a multisystem auto-immune disease). The biological explanation provided was that, at body temperature, aspartame releases wood alcohol (methanol), which turns into formic acid, which 'is in the same class of drugs as cyanide and arsenic.' Formic acid, they argued, causes metabolic acidosis. Clinically, aspartame poisoning was argued to be a cause of joint pain, numbness, cramps, vertigo, headaches, depression, anxiety, slurred speech and blurred vision. The authors claimed that aspartame remains on the market because the food and drug industries have powerful lobbies in Congress. They quoted Dr Russell Blaylock, who said, 'The ingredients stimulate the neurons of the brain to death, causing brain damage of varying degrees.'

Critique this message, in terms of the strength of the arguments presented and their logical consistency. Your critique might include an indication of the issues that you would like to delve into further before assessing the validity of these claims.

Station 3: Air Travel (Communication Skills)

Your company needs both you and a co-worker (Sara, a colleague from another branch of the company) to attend a critical business meeting in San Diego. You have just arrived to drive Sara to the airport.

Sara is in the room.

Station 4: Deterrent Fees (Knowledge of the Health Care System)

Recently, the Prime Minister of Canada raised the issue of deterrent fees (a small charge, say \$10, which everyone who initiates a visit to a health professional would have to pay at the first contact) as a way to control health care costs. The assumption is that this will deter people from visiting their doctor for unnecessary reasons.

Consider the broad implications of this policy for health and health care costs. For example, do you think the approach will save health care costs? At what expense? Discuss this issue with the interviewer.

Station 5: Standard Interview 1

Why do you want to be a physician? Discuss this question with the interviewer.

Station 6: Circumcision (Ethical Decision Making)

The Canadian Pediatric Association has recommended that circumcisions 'not be routinely performed'. They base this recommendation on their determination that 'the benefits have not been shown to clearly outweigh the risks and costs'. Doctors have no obligation to refer for, or provide, a circumcision, but many do, even when they are clearly not medically necessary. Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) no longer pays for unnecessary circumcisions.

Consider the ethical problems that exist in this case. Discuss these issues with the interviewer.

Station 7: Class Size (Critical Thinking)

Universities are commonly faced with the complicated task of balancing the educational needs of their students and the cost required to provide learning resources to a large number of individuals. As a result of this tension, there has been much debate regarding the optimal size of classes. One side argues that smaller classes provide a more educationally effective setting for students, while others argue that it makes no difference, so larger classes should be used to minimise the number of instructors required.

Discuss your opinion on this issue with the examiner.

Station 8: Parking Garage (Communication Skills)

The parking garage at your place of work has assigned parking spots. On leaving your spot, you are observed by the garage attendant as you back into a neighbouring car, a BMW, knocking out its left front headlight and denting the left front fender. The garage attendant gives you the name and office number of the owner of the neighbouring car, telling you that he is calling ahead to the car owner, Tim. The garage attendant tells you that Tim is expecting your visit.

Enter Tim's office.

Station 9: Preferential Admission (Knowledge of the Health Care System)

Due to the shortage of physicians in rural communities such as those in Northern Ontario, it has been suggested that medical programmes preferentially admit students who are willing to commit to a 2- or 3-year tenure in an under-serviced area upon graduation.

Consider the broad implications of this policy for health and health care costs. For example, do you think the approach will be effective? At what expense? Discuss this issue with the interviewer.

Station 10: Standard Interview 2

What experiences have you had (and what insights have you gained from these experiences) that lead you to believe you would be a good physician?

Discuss this question with the interviewer.

* Eva KW, Rosenfeld J, Reiter HI, Norman GR. (2004). An admissions OSCE: The Multiple Mini-Interview. *Medical Education* 38: 314-326. Blackwell Publishing.