

GAT Page

PREPARING FOR THE CONSULTANT INTERVIEW

A Consultant post is often for life, so first make sure this job is right for you. Ask yourself what your priorities are: the job (subspecialty, academic work); quality of life (area, housing, schooling); financial (opportunity for additional income). Discuss it with your partner. If you are targeting a particular hospital, make an appointment with the clinical director (CD) to find out about future posts and, if possible, available sessions. If you have a special interest, make this known as it can help with job planning. Jobs are usually advertised in the BMJ and the closing date is often three weeks later. Ask for a job description to be sent to you if you are thinking about applying.

10 Make an impression with a fabulous CV! This helps you to get short-listed, but also remember that the short-listing panel is often the interview panel. A lot of candidates will have gone through a comparable training and CV's will look similar. Make your CV fit the job description of the post for which you are applying. Read the person specification. Convince the panel that you are the ideal person for this job and the department. If you list everything you have ever done in text style, the CV may appear cluttered. A summary logbook printout attached to the CV might be an efficient and easy way of doing that. Make it look smart, have a front page, number the pages, use a uniform type throughout with a readable type size and consistent formatting. Think about using quality paper and a folder. Write about past experience if it is relevant and impressive. Prepare the CV well in advance and show it to people whose opinion you value. There must be no spelling mistakes and the contact details must be accurate. Choose your referees carefully. Ask them if they would support your application, not just if they would be happy to write a reference.

Once the job is advertised, make an appointment for an 'informal' visit. This is a very important visit and is by no means informal. Look smart and professional. Do your homework. Find out as much as possible about the hospital and the department (annual reports, hospital websites,

departmental portfolios) and demonstrate that you have done so. It shows that you are keen and interested. You may find

out about current areas of concern or development plans. Be complimentary, but not insincere and don't be rude about previous employers or departments. All the embarrassing questions can be asked (tactfully) at this point. Don't forget that the department will usually be looking for someone who is competent, pleasant and easy to get along with as, potentially, you will be a colleague for the next 30 years. Once you are short listed, make an appointment with everyone on the interview panel for the formal visit, usually the CD, MD (medical director), university representative, chairperson, management and departmental representative. See the secretaries and the anaesthetic service manager. The College representative will be from outside. Some panel members might not want to see you (our MD, for example, never sees a candidate before the interview) but you should have tried to make an appointment. At this point ask where the interview room is and find out about the layout as it helps with the preparation. Make sure you know where the nearest toilets are.

Your interview preparations will involve a significant amount of 'homework' to 'mug up' on topical issues e.g. the consultant contract, anaesthesia practitioners. The links listed below should help direct your research. I would recommend that you condense your knowledge into key points, and I think it helps to have an opinion one way or another. This is the one time that you really get up-to-date on medical politics - and you are almost guaranteed not to be asked about any of it! Get plenty of interview practice. Observe yourself in a mirror and look at your body language.

The interview lasts about 30-40 minutes. The chairperson will welcome you and introduce the members of the panel.

Make a good first impression, offer a firm handshake if the opportunity arises (this rarely occurs as the panel are sitting a distance away from you), try to smile and make eye contact. They usually ask a general warm-up question and will hand over to the college representative who will ask about your training and CV. The other panel members follow after that.

You can be asked a wide range of questions about you as a person and



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colleague, about teaching (and academia), clinical governance, management and general medical issues. It is quite common for a 10-15 minute formal presentation to be part of the interview, usually at the beginning. Check well in advance what audio-visual equipment will be available. Make sure that if you declare a special interest you know about recent guidelines and developments. Try not to waffle, and make it clear if you do not understand the question, or if you do not know the answer. Clinical questions are unlikely. You have reached your CCST and you are deemed competent. If you apply for a general job in a District General Hospital, however, you might be asked, for example, if you are happy to stabilise a child in A&E.

Some interview questions can be found on our website www.aagbi.org/trainee.asp

Useful things to read are:

GAT handbook (latest launched in June 2005)
www.aagbi.org/trainee.asp

The Build-up to the Consultant Interview www.aagbi.org/pdf/gat_handbook2005.pdf

Tips on Interview Skills www.aagbi.org/trainee.asp

AAGBI guidelines and glossies www.aagbi.org

RCA guidelines www.rcoa.ac.uk

Hospital doctor www.hospital-doctor.net

BMA news www.bma.org.uk/bmanews

Department of Health guidelines www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance

Health service related topics in the main national papers

More useful websites:

NICE www.nice.org.uk

The Modernisation Agency www.modern.nhs.uk

The Healthcare Commission www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

Useful courses/seminars

The consultant interview seminar

www.aagbi.org/events_seminars_news.html

Preparing for the consultant role

www.aagbi.org/events_seminars_news.html

Management course

Don't worry if you don't get the job, it's their loss. Not all succeed the first time. Ask for feed-back and make it a learning experience.

Good luck!

Barbara Bahlmann

GAT Committee

Coordinator of GAT Consultant Interview Seminar

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