

## Preparing to Become a Health Care Practitioner



As you begin to think about your collegiate experience and where you hope to be following graduation, you may be considering a career as a health care practitioner. Although you need not apply to a professional school until at least your junior year, most successful applicants are thoughtful about planning their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom beginning freshman year.

Pre-health students may and do major in any discipline without adversely affecting their admission into a health-related professional school. However, there are basic prerequisites that must be completed prior to applying. These courses are: one year each of General Chemistry with lab, Organic Chemistry with lab, Biology with lab, Physics with lab, English, and Mathematics (through calculus level). For a list of courses at Yale that meet these requirements, please stop by Undergraduate Career Services (55 Whitney Ave.) and pick up a copy of the "Premedical Studies at Yale College" handout. If you have entered Yale with AP credits, please speak with a pre-health advisor as soon as possible. *Some*, not all, of your AP credits may be applied toward your prerequisites.

### Timeline

The following timeline is an example of how you might break down your preparation year-by-year. Of course, when you take the prerequisite courses may depend on the requirements of your major department.

#### Freshman Year

- Meet with a pre-health advisor to organize your science prerequisites by semester. Take at least one science (usually General Chemistry) and one math this year in addition to English.
- Volunteer/work in a medically-related area (hospitals, medical clinics, geriatric centers, etc.). Donate your time to community service projects that interest you. Attending the Yale-Dwight Hall Open House for Volunteer Programs in the fall is a great way to learn about organizations in the area.
- If presented with an opportunity, consider engaging in research.
- Solicit applications for related summer programs or work as well.

#### Sophomore Year

- Meet with your pre-health advisor to ensure you are on track. Take Organic Chemistry and Physics.
- Consider "shadowing" a physician through Yale Medical Professions Outreach ([www.yale.edu/ympo/](http://www.yale.edu/ympo/)), continuing with volunteer work during the year.
- Become involved on campus as well as in the community. Seek out positions of leadership.
- Plan your summer experience carefully. Think about a research opportunity, summer school if needed, or a significant volunteer experience.
- Cultivate relationships with your professors and teaching assistants. You will need three academic letters of reference when you apply (2 science + 1 non-science).
- Begin preparation for the summer MCAT if you have completed the prerequisite courses.

## Junior Year

- Complete your pre-health requirements.
- Continue studying for the MCAT. Plan to take the exam either 2nd term or early summer (no later than July).
- Assume leadership roles in clubs and organizations. Continue to work/volunteer in medically-related areas and do research.
- Begin investigating the schools to which you are planning to apply.
- Open your Health Professions file with Undergraduate Career Services and begin requesting letters of recommendation from faculty members.
- Continue to read about medically-related matters: trends in medical education, ethical issues, managed health care, etc.
- Meet your pre-health advisor to discuss letters of recommendation and a list of schools to which you will apply.
- Begin working on your AMCAS application.
- Apply for fee waivers, if applicable.
- Plan for your summer.

## Senior Year

- Complete school-specific secondary applications early in fall term!
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- Consider taking Biochemistry, since it is highly recommended by medical schools.
- Finish requirements for your major.
- Schedule/prepare for interviews.
- After January 2, submit your FAFSA application for financial aid.
- Graduate!! Send final transcript to medical school you have chosen to attend.

## Qualities Sought by Professional Schools:

Admission to a professional school is NOT just a numbers game. Schools also look for certain personal attributes in their applicants. Several of these are listed below, followed by suggestions on how to demonstrate/achieve these qualities.

*Academic Achievement:* Substantive letters of recommendation from carefully chosen instructors who know you well • Strong performance on standardized tests • Participation in research experience • Strong science GPA • Significant breadth in curricular choices • High degree of difficulty in curricular choices.

*Emotional maturity, character, and integrity; sensitivity to and compassion for others:* Choice of volunteer activities • Depth and duration of involvement • Impact of volunteerism on your personal development as explained in personal essays, letters of recommendation, and responses to interview questions • Overall medical or other professional school interview performance.

*Understanding of a Career in Medicine:* Significant exposure to patients through in-depth volunteer work in a clinic/hospital, and/or as an EMT, shadowing physicians, etc. • Participation in programs that offer clinical preceptorships as part of their summer programs (AAMC's SMDEP, summer research programs) • Ability to speak knowledgeably about the challenges facing health professionals today.

*Excellent Communication Skills:* Writing compelling, genuine, focused essays that will encourage the schools to interview you • Performing well in an interview situation.

*Leadership:* Active involvement on campus and in your community • Leadership roles in your organizations (president, social chair, community service representative, etc.) • Demonstrate that you have been "in-charge" of a specific event or organization • Part of leadership is being a role model-- think about tutoring, mentoring, or becoming a freshman counselor.

## Application Timeline

Since the majority of you will eventually apply for admission to allopathic medical schools, that is the process we outline below. Those applying to osteopathic medical schools as well as allied health professions schools (i.e. veterinary, dentistry, optometry, etc.) should meet with a pre-health advisor to learn the specifics of their processes. Note: this timeline assumes a student will apply to matriculate immediately following graduation from Yale. Those considering delaying a year or two before matriculating should adjust accordingly.

*November-Junior Year:* Attend a mandatory pre-medical registration meeting at Undergraduate Career Services where you will open your file with the Health Professions Advisory Board and learn the steps you need to take to complete your autobiography and personal interview. Download UCS's booklet, "Applying to Medical School," at:

<http://www.yale.edu/career/students/gradprof/media/redbook.pdf>. Begin your preparation for the MCAT exam and plan to take it in April. Begin researching medical schools and meet with a pre-health advisor to discuss your list of schools, as well as anticipated recommenders.

*Spring or early Summer-Junior Year:* Take the MCAT exam. Access the AMCAS application on the AAMC website and begin working to complete the application. Order transcripts from all colleges/universities attended to be sent to AMCAS. This includes college-level courses taken for credit before entering Yale.

*Summer-Junior Year:* Submit the AMCAS application no later than second week of July. Contact non-AMCAS schools (primarily the UTexas schools) for their own application materials. Send letters of recommendation to the medical schools. Take the June or July MCAT if necessary. Complete and return secondary applications promptly.

*Fall-Senior Year:* Continue to work on secondary applications. Practice interviewing skills for upcoming medical school interviews. Travel to schools to interview and visit. Await acceptance decisions, which usually come from October 15<sup>th</sup> through spring. If accepted, celebrate! If rejected, don't panic. See a pre-health advisor to discuss your next course of action.

## **How We Can Help**

If you would like to discuss your individual preparation, career options within the health professions, and/or the application process specific to the advanced degree you will be seeking, please meet with your pre-health advisor early and often throughout your Yale career. You may also refer to the UCS "Applying to Medical School" booklet for more specific information relating to the medical school application process.

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