

THE PREREGISTRATION INTERVIEW

Does the thought of securing a preregistration trainee position seem like a mountainous task? Nadia Bukhari puts you at ease with a bit of advice taken from her new book

Nadia Bukhari is the preregistration co-ordinator at the School of Pharmacy, University of London, and has recently been assigned the role of programme manager for the Master's of Pharmacy course

For personal use only. Not to be reproduced without permission of the editor (permissions@pharmj.org.uk)

Competition for preregistration trainee positions is currently at its peak. This is due mainly to an increase in the number of pharmacy graduates and a stagnation in the number of posts available for preregistration trainees. So it is paramount to have a competitive edge to single one's self out from the rest of the crowd.

For the preregistration year, students can apply for trainee positions in any of the three main sectors in pharmacy: hospital, community and industry. Over 90 per cent of students apply for hospital or community pharmacy. Industrial preregistration placements are limited. Not all companies participate in the programme, so it is worth contacting the drug companies that interest you to find out whether they offer a placement or not. Companies that do offer a placement usually combine it with time spent in either the hospital or community sector.

It is advisable that students do not limit themselves by merely applying to one particular sector. The aim of the game is to have a preregistration placement, so it is best to apply to all sectors in order to increase your chances of success. Once you have passed the qualifying examination, you can then specialise in the sector you feel best suits you.

The preregistration interview is one of the most daunting experiences for undergraduate students to face. In order to understand the ideas, concerns and expectations of students with regards to the interview process,

fourth-year students at the School of Pharmacy, University of London, have been interviewed. No doubt, the sentiments they expressed will be similar to other students and below are some of their views.

What worried you most about the interview?

"Saying the right thing on the day and establishing a good relationship with the interviewers was a concern for me. I was worried about getting clinical questions right."

"The questions worried me the most. I was not sure if I was answering the questions the way they wanted me to."

Is there anything that would have helped you prepare better?

"Having a mock interview would have been useful as well as sample interview questions."

"I wish I had done a hospital placement. It would have saved me time reading up on issues such as 'how do hospital pharmacists work', etc. I had to learn it all from scratch."

Was the interview experience as you expected? How?

"Yes. I had prepared well and done the research. The structure was similar to what I had prepared."

"Not really. I expected it to be more difficult and intense."

"They did not ask as many clinical

questions as I anticipated."

"No. I thought you had to ask lots of questions but it was me doing most of the answering."

"No. I thought the interview would be knowledge based. They asked questions on different areas of the undergraduate course, but there were more clinical questions. My community interview was more competencies based."

As you can gather, perceptions of the interview process vary from person to person. This can depend on where you are applying. Before attending interviews, try to talk to preregistration trainees who work at the hospital or company to which you have applied. This will prepare you better for the big day and also remove the "fear of the unknown" factor, by giving you a brief insight on what to expect.

Below are some real questions which have been asked at hospital, community and industry interviews:

Clinical

1. What is TDM and what is it used for? Can you give some examples of drugs that are monitored in this way?
2. What counselling points would you give to a patient on antibiotics?
3. What is the difference between salbutamol and beclometasone inhalers?
4. How would you counsel someone on metronidazole?

Work place

“The questions worried me the most. I was not sure if I was answering the questions the way they wanted me to.”

“Saying the right thing on the day and establishing a good relationship with the interviewers was a concern for me. I was worried about getting clinical questions right.”

“Having a mock interview would have been useful as well as sample interview questions.”

1. What would you say to a colleague, also a pharmacist, who was complaining that a technician was taking over your roles?
2. Can you give us a situation during your community placement where a customer was dissatisfied? How did you deal with it? How did you manage to turn the situation around?

General

1. Which do you prefer: lab work or ward work? Why?
 2. What is customer service? How do you give good customer service? Tell us about one time you had to provide good customer service.
 3. You lived in the same place from primary school until university, so how can you demonstrate that you can be a responsible and an independent person?
- More questions, including those on

teamwork, academia, motivation, ethics, professional development, policies and protocols, and the NHS can be found in the Pharmaceutical Press publication 'The pre-registration interview: preparation for the application process' which will be available from May 2007. This book also contains further information on summer placements, where and how to apply for preregistration positions, the process of application, what employers are looking for, how to conduct yourself on the day of the interview and what to do if it all goes wrong.

This book is intended to examine students' ideas, concerns and expectations of the entire interview process. By addressing these, it is hoped that students will be more knowledgeable about the application process.

To purchase a copy of 'The pre-registration interview':

- Order online at www.pharmpress.com
- By e-mail: UK and worldwide (excluding the Americas)
rps@turpin-distribution.com
- By telephone: 01767 604971
- By Fax: 01767 601640

Pharmaceutical Press is an imprint of RPS Publishing, the publishing organisation of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. RPS Publishing is a leading international provider of books, textbooks, major reference works, journals and digital products. To find out more about RPS Publishing, go to www.rpspublishing.com. To go directly to the Pharmaceutical Press website visit www.pharmpress.com.

'The Pre-registration Interview: preparation for the application process' by Nadia Bukhari. Price: £15.95. London: Pharmaceutical Press; 2007. ISBN: 0 85369 698 5