



APPENDIX F

Questions to Ask and Avoid When Interviewing

Asking good questions can show you are prepared, interested in a residency or fellowship program, and eager about the opportunities there if you match.

*Good questions you might ask the **residency program director (RPD)**, **residency interview committee members**, or **preceptors** include the following:*

- What are some positions that your former residents have taken and that current residents are seeking after completing the residency?
- What choices are available for the elective months (if not available on website or program information)?
- Which electronic health record system does your hospital use? What challenges have been encountered with this system?
- Are patient care treatment decisions approached in an interprofessional manner?
- What are the challenges to achieve interprofessional patient care?
- What is your teaching philosophy for your postgraduate year-1 or -2 residents versus your students?

186 Get the Residency

- What research or scholarly opportunities are available?
- What community service opportunities are available during the residency?
- How do you define a successful resident?
- I noticed that you have an affiliation with University X. What teaching opportunities are available?
- I noticed that Children's Hospital Y is in your vicinity. Is it possible to do a rotation there?
- I noticed you offer a PGY-2 in (state specialty of choice). Do you participate in the early commit process?
- *For non-accredited programs or fellowships:* What follow-up procedures does your program have after the interview?
- *For non-accredited programs or fellowships:* What is your policy or timeline for offering positions to applicants?

*Good questions you might ask **current resident(s)** include the following:*

- What type of orientation or onboarding process is there for new residents?
- What is the training process for staffing independently? What would you improve with the process to increase your confidence in staffing independently?
- What was the most important aspect that made you choose this residency?
- What opportunities for informal learning is available to residents?
- What have your precepting experiences been like (if applicable)?
- What kind of/how frequently do you receive feedback and evaluations?
- How does the RPD and preceptors support you as a resident?
- Have you ever had second thoughts about choosing this program? Why/Why not?
- How accessible is the RPD?
- What type of mentoring program is available between residents and preceptors? How could the mentoring be improved?
- Could you characterize the patient demographics here?
- Is maintaining a work-life balance part of the culture here?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with other residents?
- What opportunities do you have to interact with other pharmacy residents in nonprofessional settings (e.g., team building, community service, social events)?

Some questions require tact on your end to avoid the implication that you may have something better to do, or that you are sweating the small stuff. Some of these details are important (e.g., vacation, work hours); however, they can be asked toward the end of the interview or *after* the initial interview.

Common inappropriate questions (and possible alternatives) asked include the following:

- How many hours do we staff? INSTEAD, “What are the expectations for staffing throughout the year?”
- How many vacation/sick days do we get? INSTEAD “What benefits are available for residents?” “What is the staffing policy for holidays?” “How are vacation days allocated among residents?”
- How early in the day do we start? and What time do we normally stop? INSTEAD “Describe your typical day during your XX rotation.”
- Do we have to carry a pager and be “on call”? If so, how often is that? INSTEAD “What opportunities are available to be “on call”?”
- Will I be able to have a second job to make more money? INSTEAD “Does the program provide per-diem opportunities for residents? Are residents permitted to gain extra pharmacy experience by working a pharmacy *per diem* job (for example in a community pharmacy)?”



Some students are getting bad advice about looking for a residency that has no staffing hours. Staffing is a vital component of a residency providing experiences that will make you a better pharmacist.

These opportunities include the following:

- Learning the drug distribution system, computer software, and pharmacy logistics
- Learning the cognitive processes involved in the drug approval process, knowledge of drug formulations and administrations, and circumstances requiring specially prepared formulations
- Making decisions in a short amount of time as a staff pharmacist (i.e., understanding the stress)
- Learning prescribing patterns of physicians (good or bad) and how to facilitate positive change
- Sharpening your order entry/verification skills
- Knowing you are the last person to verify a medication before it is dispensed