Gaining experience for medical school

Gaining experience for any health career is important. It shows that you've found out about the role you're interested in and understand of what it's involves.

This is particularly important when applying to medical school as entry is competitive and the training is demanding.

Medical schools expect applicants to have gained relevant some experience as it will:

- help you decide whether medicine is the career for you
- give you something to mention in your UCAS personal statement [1] and to discuss at interviews
- demonstrate your commitment to medicine
- help you stand out from the competition

Any experience in healthcare is useful, but try to have contact with patients and doctors and/or other healthcare professionals. Aim to get as much experience as you can and the more varied the better.

You could combine a stint volunteering at a hospital with shadowing a GP, for example. This would give you a wider feel for the different types of roles in medicine. Also, the sooner you organise your experience, the more opportunities you will have.

- ## How can I gain experience?

  The main ways you might gain experience are through:

  - work shadowing [2]
  - volunteering [3]
  - paid work [4]

However, there are other opportunities to find out more about medicine.

- work experience placements in some areas of medicine are hard to come by because of the nature of the work and patient privacy, but a placement in a healthcare setting or anywhere where you deal with vulnerable people (eg with a charity) may give you the chance to find out about the work of healthcare professionals and will demonstrate your interest in people
- if you're involved in the care of a sick, disabled or older relative, this may bring you into contact with medics and other healthcare professionals
- you could arrange to talk to a doctor about their role. Prepare a list of suitable questions about their training and career
- if you are at school or college, ask whether it would be possible for a doctor to give a talk about their career, or for a medical school tutor to speak about what it takes to train as a doctor
- reading the real life stories on this website will also give you an insight into what the work of a doctor involves
- you could visit a medical museum

There are a number of programmes to help aspiring medical students in gaining experience before medical school. Some of these are commercial ventures and you will be charged.

Find out more about work experience by reading our real-life stories from doctors. [5]

General tips on making the most of your experience can be found under gaining experience [6].

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/your-ucas-application [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical/shadowing [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical/volunteering [4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical/paid-work [5] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical/real-life-story [6] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience