

**CAPTURE**  
**WITH**  
**CONFIDENCE**

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**A GUIDE TO ACING MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEWS**

**PAMELA CAPELLAN**

# Capture with Confidence

A Guide to Acing Medical School Interviews

By

Pamela Capellan

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# DISCLAIMER

**T**he author makes no guarantees concerning the level of success you may experience by following the advice and strategies contained in this book, results may differ for each individual.

The author has attempted to recreate events and conversations from memory. To maintain anonymity, the author has changed the names and identifying characteristics of individuals.

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# I Introduction: What's the Big Deal about Confidence?

**M**y name is Pamela Capellan, and I am a third-year medical student at Weill Cornell Medicine. Having attended more interviews than I can count, I have gained confidence in myself as a medical school student and a person.

For me, medical school interviews were largely a process of trial and error. Early in the process, I meticulously rehearsed my answers to potential questions. However, I still walked into interviews feeling nervous. I felt like an imposter. Today, I see that I underestimated the importance of *practicing* confidence. Luckily, I gathered confidence along the interview trail. Eventually, I could reliably demonstrate to my interviewers that I was an asset to their institution. I look back at my interview trail with great appreciation for the self-confidence it instilled in me. However, I am writing this book so that you will learn from my experience. From the beginning of your process, I want you to capture your audience. When you enter the room, I want you to exude confidence.

This guide does not contain interview questions you should practice nor what I think are perfect responses. Rather, it will provide strategies, exercises, and advice to improve confidence about the interview process, and how to effectively prepare for medical school interviews. I realized over time that confidence, particularly in medicine, is essential. Confidence will allow you to guide your patients through difficult decisions. It will enable you to gain trust and credibility among your colleagues. It will allow you to contribute unique ideas to the field. The great thing about this confidence is that it can be learned over time — if you're interested, keep reading!

# II

## The Daily Work

**D**o you know those people that walk into a room with a confident aura that captivates the room? If you do not, take some time to watch a YouTube video of Beyoncé standing on stage for five minutes, while the crowd goes wild. Study Beyoncé’s body language, and the confidence that radiates from her to your screen. Beyoncé did not magically wake up one day with this super power. Well, maybe *Beyoncé* did. Most people who have the kind of magnetism we’re talking about practiced building and portraying such confidence over the course of days, months, and years.

Now, why is this important for medical school interviews? Typically, you are not alone in a medical school interview. Rather, you are accompanied by a group of somewhere between 5 to 30 applicants through several sessions over the course of a day, with just one or two 30-minute individual interviews. Sometimes, in these sessions, you will engage with one another, and as a group, discuss topics with the deans and directors of the program. It is important that you are distinctive and shine among (though not necessarily outshine) your peers. When you speak in discussions or even make eye contact with the directors and deans, you want to be memorable and captivating to those observing you. The way you do so is by practicing your body language, speech, and confidence, of course.

### **Confident Body Language**

Let us begin with body language. Since I could walk, my parents corrected my posture. They stressed time and again the importance of standing tall, and yet, despite their persistence, I remained mostly hunched. Then, I

stumbled upon the pageant show, Miss Universe, where I admired the confidence with which the contestants strutted on the stage. I looked forward to the yearly pageant and eventually decided to pursue modeling as a hobby. My mother signed me up for local modeling classes in Washington Heights. Fast forward to six months of catwalk training, I was a complete failure at walking on stage, but I learned from the experts that correcting my posture, specifically leveling my chest higher (not too high), placing my shoulders outward, and elongating my neck was key to appearing more confident. Take a look at performers, speakers, and dancers, and note how they stand tall and place their hands in comfortable positions. Before they speak or perform, you already are captivated. Practice your posture and stand tall every single day. Ask family and friends to correct you if you are slouching, purchase a posture corrector, or do posture checks with yourself every 30 minutes while studying. Too often, I have come across students in expensive suits and sleek hairstyles, whose posture takes away from their appearance and confidence. Other tips about body language to keep in mind:

- Find a comfortable place for your hands. When sitting down to speak to someone, cross your hands at your lap or on the table. Do not twirl your hair. Avoid talking too much with your hands.
- Be mindful of eye contact. In some cultures, looking at someone in the eyes is disrespectful. For the purposes of medical school interviews in the U.S., direct your eyes toward the individual speaking, and if you lock eyes with someone, don't be afraid to smile! Practice by making eye contact with your classmates, colleagues, coworkers, or community members when speaking or simply passing by. If it feels awkward, then smile or wave hello!
- Smile! There is a thin line between being perceived as confident and being perceived as cocky. Stay on the confident side by not being afraid to smile (when appropriate) to fellow applicants, directors, staff, and deans. Be sure to demonstrate understanding and continued listening by nodding, when appropriate, even when in a large group.