ST3 Urology Interview Overview

The urology ST3 Interview is a national selection process that consists of five stations in total. Each station lasts approximately 15 minutes. You will be assessed and scored at each station by two Consultants. There may be a lay person in the station to ensure the interview process is conducted fairly. Stations are generally very fair, and the same questions often come up time and time again. The more you practice, the more likely you are to secure your top choice ST3 job. In addition to this blog post, to help you prepare we have compiled over 120 past questions and model answers.

***1. Portfolio Station***

Remember the consultants from the interview station already have your portfolio. They will have had 15 minutes with which to score your portfolio against the marking scheme. You will then enter the station for a maximum of 15 minutes.

During our preparation for the interview we spent a great deal of time preparing questions such as ‘ why do you want to do your urology?’, ‘Please give us an example of when you have worked as a team player/leader/showed empathy/made a mistake etc…’ However at no point during the portfolio station were any of these questions asked. The portfolio station is primarily a box-ticking exercise. We were reassured with how fair the examiners were. They were desperate to ensure they gave us the best score, even identifying areas where marks could be improved. They want you to do well.

The same score sheet is used for all candidates, but extra weighting is given to candidates with less experience. This is because the interview process is designed to favour applicants who are currently in their second year of Core Training. Candidates with many years of experience after qualification will be at a disadvantage on this station unless they have accumulated many extra degrees, publications, presentations etc.

You may be asked to show evidence in each of the areas specified in the application guidance, so make sure your portfolio is well structured and your evidence is easily found.

***2. Emergency Station***

This station is divided into two parts. Seen and unseen. Outside of the room, you will be provided with a short clinical scenario. You will have 1 minute to read the paragraph of text. The 1st half of the station will relate to a short scenario provided outside the room. During the second half the interviewer will give you a further scenario requiring you to think on your feet.

After spending 1 minute reading the scenario outside the room, a bell will sound and you will enter. The written scenario will be on the table in the room, and you will be asked if you have understood the scenario or would like to read it again. Make sure you have understood it outside the room, further reading will just eat into your answer time.

You will have around 5 minutes to talk through your management plan for the Clinical Scenario. Make sure you identify all the issues at the beginning. The interviewers will provide you with more information if required. These can usually be anticipated (e.g. CT reports).

Halfway through you the scenario, regardless of progress, the second examiner will take over with the ‘unseen’ scenario. This tends to be a more straightforward scenario. You will have the remaining duration of the interview to discuss your management.

***3. Communication Station***

This is a classic communication skills station that you will all be familiar with. The role of the patient will be played by an actor and there will be 2 interviewers in the room taking notes. As with the other stations, you will have one minute outside the room to read the scenario. This will be approximately a paragraph of text describing the situation. You will be provided with paper and a pen to make notes which you can take into the room with you (these must be handed to the interviewers at the end of the station).

Take time to read the scenario carefully and make a few key notes. You'll then go into the room and have approximately 9 minutes to speak with the patient. Often there'll be a lot of ground to cover and multiple issues to address. Time is quite tight so try to rapidly steer the conversation to the patient's concerns.

With one minute to go a bell will sound and you will need to wrap up your consultation. During this one minute, if you've not done so already, offer the patient clear instructions on how you plan to move things forward.

***4. Outpatients Station***

Perhaps the most feared amongst candidates.  Although there is a lot of scope for questions during this station, the interviewers want to get more of a sense of your decision-making skills rather than, for example, your detailed knowledge of the management of locally advanced prostate cancer. In your preparation try to gain a broad overview of each of the topics rather than deep specific knowledge.

If at any point you are struggling the interviewers will prompt you or move you onto the next subsection of the scenario.

***5. Procedure and Technical Skills***

In our view perhaps the easiest station to prepare for, the scope is limited to only a few procedures. Based on previous years these include Flexible cystoscopy, suprapubic catheterisation, circumcision, and perhaps ureteric stent if you are unlucky.

Outside the room, you will have 1 min to read the scenario. It is likely to be clear from the scenario what you are expected to do, so in your mind start to prepare answers to questions you are likely to be asked: Indications, Contraindications, Alternatives, Risks, Consent process etc.

When you enter the room, you will be presented with a selection of equipment. One station from the 2017 interview had an SPC model with some needles etc., so it what quite clear what was expected of us!

Overall, the key to success at the urology interview is to prepare for each station individually. If you have any questions about the interview process. please get in touch. You can also read our other blog posts and prepare using our online question bank. Good luck!