



EDITOR'S PAGE

WWAMI: A Unique Opportunity for Wyoming Students

By Robert Monger, MD



This is my second year serving on the Wyoming WWAMI Medical School Admissions Committee, and I couldn't be more impressed with the quality of the students who apply to the program.

Wyoming currently accepts 20 students per year into the program, and since 2010 the state has averaged about 55 applicants per year. In order to be invited for an interview, students must meet GPA and MCAT standards as well as a number of other requirements. In recent years, the committee has invited about 40 students per year for an interview.

Interestingly, of the six physicians on the admissions committee, only the two chairpersons know each interviewee's GPA and MCAT score at the time of the interview. The reason behind this decision is that if a student passes the initial screening process and is invited to an interview, then we have already determined that they are academically fit to get through medical school and we don't want the interviewers to focus too much on the applicant's test scores or GPA during the interview.

Cutting the Cost

Medical school is expensive. First year in-state (resident) tuition at the University of Washington School of Medicine is about \$30,000 with an estimated total cost for the first year (including books, room, board, and other expenses) of \$50,000. The tuition and total costs go up in the third and fourth year of medical school, and the current fourth year in-state tuition is about \$39,000 with a total estimated cost for that year of \$65,000. If you add everything up, the total cost of four years of medical school at the University of Washington for in-state students is well over \$200,000.

Wyoming WWAMI medical students currently pay about \$12,000 per year in tuition, plus room and board and other expenses. If they return to Wyoming for three years after they complete their medical training, then all their other debt is forgiven. If they don't return to Wyoming, then they owe the State about an additional \$164,000 that is paid back over an eight-year period of time.



Informed and Ready

What is the admissions committee looking for in an applicant? In addition to academic excellence, applicants are encouraged to have research and volunteer experience as well as time shadowing a physician. The University of Washington encourages students to have a minimum of 40 hours of shadowing experience before they apply to medical school, but I've seen applicants who have had hundreds of hours. If an applicant doesn't have shadowing experience, it's unlikely that he or she will be invited for an interview.

Why is shadowing so important? The hope is that shadowing will help students know what it's really like to be a physician before they embark on the long road of medical education. (One problem

with the shadowing requirement is that many pre-med students don't know many doctors or how to arrange a shadowing experience. The WWAMI office at the College of Health Sciences in Laramie tries to help pre-med students arrange shadowing experiences, and if you would be willing to have a pre-med student shadow you, please contact that office.)

Investing in the Future

My advice to students who ask me about the WWAMI medical school program is that it's an amazing opportunity for Wyoming students, particularly if they plan to return to the state. And while it's great that much of their

medical school tuition will be forgiven if a student later returns to Wyoming, the best part about the program is that the University of Washington is a top-rated medical school that provides a world-class education to its students. Medical school graduates from the University of Washington have virtually unlimited opportunities.

Serving on the admissions committee is very inspiring. The applicants have worked extremely hard to get into medical school, and interviewing them makes you appreciate what a privilege it is to be a physician. We're fortunate to have such a great medical school program for Wyoming residents. We're extremely fortunate to have such wonderful young adults in our state who are so dedicated to becoming physicians. Hopefully many of them will return to live and practice in Wyoming.