

Medicus May

More than face value

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One of the hot topics on the medical student scene lately has been the fluid trends in medical student selection. Whether a school subscribes to an undergraduate or graduate structure determines the use of the UMAT aptitude test or the cognitive ability test GAMSAT respectively. Different schools place varying emphasis (percentage wise) on previous academic performance, GAMSAT or UMAT ranking and surviving a face-to-face interview. The "controversy" was sparked when the country's largest medical school, the University of Queensland decided to drop interviews for medical student hopefuls. The university cited the "useless" interviews as being tainted with bias and a poor indicator of future academic performance.

In a recent edition of the Medical Observer the interviews were said to "let through people they are meant to eliminate and may be biased towards people with a pleasing appearance". Some commentators have noted that the interview process although short (one hour), could serve to distil the motivations of a prospective medical student - is it money or prestige, is it altruism or continued learning? Others have disputed the need for sifting the wheat from the chaff in terms of people skills. They argue that this would ignore the many niches within medicine that require a higher emphasis on a broad knowledge basis and not so much a bright smile and an empathetic nature, (I'm looking at you pathology).

In light of these events and comments one is compelled to self assess. Notre Dame Fremantle, graduate medical school: students from high achieving backgrounds in every direction (literally everywhere - the library is cosy in free) and yes, they're all really, really good looking. As to the selection process being inadequate and biased - it is one I would personally strongly contend. With any selection process there are bound to be a few individuals who find themselves out of their depth - however, determination, commitment and gold standard training will mean the product will be quality graduates who will strive to ensure patient safety above all.