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978-1-108-70871-5 — How to Succeed in the Academic Clinical Interview

Wei Keith Tan , Rory Piper

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How to Succeed in the Academic Clinical Interview

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To our families, who have supported us in every step of our careers

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Preface

A career in clinical academia offers doctors the opportunity to work at the bidirectional interface between the research frontier and treating patients. The opportunity to work from bench to bedside is an exciting and rewarding prospect that allows us to improve patient care. While it is an inspirational career choice, a career in academic medicine is a challenging one. One of the first challenges is securing a competitive position as a clinical academic and then retaining it.

How to Succeed in the Academic Clinical Interview is intended as a compendium for applicants to academic clinical positions in the UK and is therefore aimed primarily at medical students, foundation doctors, and trainees. Through personal experience when applying for these positions, we noted a lack of resources surrounding the application process. Spurred on by the requests from medical students and trainees for advice on the academic application and interview, we have been led to the idea that we should incorporate our thoughts and experiences into the form of a book.

The objectives of the book are:

1. To give guidance on the generic UK academic pathways and posts, including the Academic Foundation Programme (AFP), Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF), and Academic Clinical Lectureship (ACL), and how applicants may wish to navigate their career path
2. To give guidance on how to build an academic portfolio
3. To give guidance on how to prepare the typical clinical academic application form
4. To give guidance on acing the clinical academic interview

In this book we choose to act as a guide to the generic academic application and interview, rather than focusing on the AFP or the ACF (and so on) separately. The general principles and foundations covered here should also largely hold true for PhD and grant applications. Although there clearly is a difference in criteria required between posts, in our experience these applications and interviews follow a remarkably similar format and require a similar preparatory approach. After all, by preparing at an ACF standard, this can only make the possibility of success at the AFP level more promising.

This book is used effectively when combined with (1) identifying a good mentor(s) and (2) speaking to many other established academic trainees. We wish to emphasise that the contents of this book are heavily influenced by our personal experiences and stress that the nature of the contents are at risk of subjectivity. As we have not applied and interviewed for every post in the country, the contents listed in the book do not reflect the interview structures of all deaneries, but may be biased towards deaneries to which we have applied. We therefore urge you to speak to as many clinical academics as possible to get well-rounded advice. The general principles, however, for preparing for the academic interview described here are the same and will hold true wherever you are.

In this book we try to provide a high-quality answer to each question, and this naturally draws on examples of high-flying achievements and outcomes. Do not be discouraged if your curriculum vitae, application form, or interview answers are not at the standards seen in this book. Everyone (including us!) is different, and each of us has our stronger and

weaker elements. This book aims to maximise your chances of success by capitalising on your strengths and achievements.

We are passionate about clinical research and hope that future generations will be too. We would like to emphasise that there should be no barriers in the way of keen junior doctors and medical students pursuing research. Equal opportunities should be provided for all. A recent survey of 1,625 medical students from 38 countries revealed that respondents thought that key barriers to pursuing research were lack of time as well as difficulty finding projects and mentors.¹ We will spend time in this book discussing how these barriers, and others, can be overcome. Also, it was noted in the aforementioned study that female students (60 per cent of the cohort) were more likely to report barriers to research involvement. In this book, we use the feminine pronoun in the first half of the book, and the masculine pronoun in the second half, with the intention of (besides avoiding the passive tense) encouraging young clinical academics, both male and female.

The building blocks of this book are inherited from the help, wisdom, and advice from our mentors and colleagues. We are indebted to those who have guided us and we hope to pass some of this knowledge and experience on to you.

Lastly, we would greatly appreciate if you could send us your feedback on this book, as well as any new interview questions you encounter, to clinicalacademicpost@gmail.com so as to allow us to stay up to date with the current interview process and to update the contents in subsequent editions of this book.

We wish you every success in your academic clinical career!

Keith Tan
Rory Piper

¹ Funston G, Piper RJ, Connell C, et al. Medical student perceptions of research and research-orientated careers: An international questionnaire study. *Med Teach* 2016;38:1041–8. DOI: 10.3109/0142159X.2016.1150981.

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