Behavioral Based Interviewing to Assess Residency Applicants
Background on Behavioral Based Interviewing

• Focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related.
• It’s not “What would you do?” It’s “What did you do?”
• Questions relate to desired attributes.
• Based on the belief that past behavior and performance predicts future behavior and performance.
• Discover: Knowledge, attributes and behaviors.
• Identifies the best performers.
Background on Behavioral Based Interviewing

• Interviewee uses work experience, activities, hobbies, volunteer work, church, school projects, family life as examples of past behavior.

• Current employment literature indicates a strong trend towards this type of interviewing.
Background on Behavioral Based Interviewing

- Initiated by IBM in the 1950’s to better assess “people skills.”
- Structured selection techniques have a better track record of identifying the soundest candidate than the old-style "biographical" interview.
- The cost of a bad hire is 3.2 times the individual's salary (cost of the hire, training costs, severance pay, loss of productivity, impact on morale, cost of re-hiring, etc.).
Benefits

• Improve quality of those hired
• Decrease unwanted turnover
• Decrease poor performance issues
• Decrease litigation
• Increase morale in the workplace
Other types of interviews

• **Biographical** – Basically getting to know the applicant a little more.

• **Stress interview** – Find out how the candidate handles stress. Questions about handling work overload, dealing with multiple projects, and handling conflict are typical.

• **Technical Interview** -- Focuses on problem solving and creativity. Interviewees are often a small quiz or set of questions aimed at problem-solving skills, ability and creativity.
Traditional vs. behavioral based interview

• Compare
  – Do you communicate well with others?
  – What would you do if you had to work with someone to help them understand a complex issue?
  – I see you did a acting internship in Heme-Onc. Tell me about a time when you had to help a family understand a difficult concept. What do you do to help them understand?
What to evaluate in a behavioral interview

• Three types of skills: Content skills, Functional (a.k.a. transferable skills) and adaptive skills (a.k.a. self management skills)
  – **Content Skills** – Knowledge that is work specific such as nursing, computer programming and accounting expressed as nouns.
  – **Functional or Transferable Skills** – Used with people, information or things such as organizing, managing, developing or communicating expressed as verbs.
  – **Adaptive or Self-Management Skills** – Personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed or punctual expressed as adjectives.
Interviewing questions

• Three types of questions typically found in interviews
  – **Theoretical questions** -- Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation. These questions are more likely to test your skill at answering questions rather than in doing a good job. *Example*: How would you organize your friends to help you move into a new apartment?
  – **Leading questions** -- Questions that hint at the answer the interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased. *Example*: Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?
  – **Behavioral questions** -- Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experience and concentrate on job related functions.
Interviewing questions

• Three typical behavioral questions
  – Open-ended questions – These require more than a yes or no response. They often begin with “Tell me...”, “Describe...”, or “When...”.
    *Example*: Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a work load.
  – Close-ended questions – Used mostly to verify or confirm information.
    *Example*: You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?
  – Why questions – Used to reveal rationale for decisions made by the interviewee or to determine level of motivation.
    *Example*: Why did you decide to major in this program at CWRU rather than at a small private college or larger university?
Benefits for our program

- Improved applicant experience.
- Eliminates unacceptable applicants.
- Increases use of the DNR (Do not rank list).
- Respect for applicant.
- Show applicant that we actually cared to review their CV.
- In use at University of Connecticut Pediatric residency program with 86% of applicants stating that the “liked” the approach.
Questions to avoid

• Leading questions
• Yes or No questions
• Theoretical / hypothetical questions
• Questions based on assumptions
• Improper questions
Name that question

• How would you resolve a customer service problem where the customer demanded an immediate refund?
  – Structured but theoretical
Name that question

• Are you able to juggle a number of work priorities?
  – Yes / no
Name that question

- You can work weekends occasionally, can’t you?
  - Leading
Name that question

• Being female, you must be interested in our maternity leave policy?
  – Assumptions / improper
The process

• Conduct a job analysis
• Identify attributes and criteria for success
• Develop the questions
• Conduct the interview
• Score the interview
• Determine use (deploy) in recruitment ranking
• Implement
What should we be looking for (i.e. how to beat the behavioral based interview)

- **Problem (P)** – I was on a rotation at the hospital and patients started to feel that their care was being dictated by all the drug reps that were mingling with the team on the wards.
- **Action (A)** – I designed a survey about perceived drug rep influence for all patients admitted to our team during a two week period and got permission from the hospital to give the survey. 20 surveys were returned which showed that more than half of patients did feel that their care was often influenced by the presence of drug reps. I met with the internal medicine clerkship director and chairperson of internal medicine to share the results.
- **Result (R)** – The chairperson of internal medicine used this information to restrict drug reps from interacting with attending, residents and students while on the ward.
What should interviewees be doing before the interview

• Analyze the type of positions for which they are applying.
• Use the MHMC website to get an understanding of unique characteristics to this program.
• Determine the specialized skills which are germane to our patients.
• Analyze their own background and determine they skills (content, functional, and adaptive) which relate to being a Med-Peds resident at our program.
• Identify examples from their past experience where they demonstrated those skills.
What should interviewees be doing before the interview

• Prepare two to four “stories” about their particular skills or knowledge.
• Use these stories as a framework to develop complete PAR answers.
• Wherever possible, quantify the results with numbers to illustrate their level of authority and responsibility.
• Be prepared to provide examples when results didn't turn out as planned and state what they did with the results.
## Attributes identified so far

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Making questions

• Review CV
• Match points on the CV with the attributes which we determine to be the most important
• Ask these questions to the applicant
  – Have backup questions: Why can’t you decide
  – Probe further: What did you learn about yourself
  – I don’t know what I would do, but what did you do?
  – Realize that the applicant may not remember something if it was a long time ago
  – Allow the applicant to substitute a situation
Making questions

• Traditional
  – Do you manage stressful situations well?

• Behavioral based
  – I noticed that you worked on the rape crisis hotline in college. Tell me about a difficult call that you had, and how you managed the stress of the situation.
Making questions

• Traditional
  – Do you handle conflict well?

• Behavioral based
  – As a member of the planning board for the health fair, there may have been times when members of your team disagreed. Tell me about an instance when you had to help resolve a disagreement.
Grading answers

• Have a general idea of what the answer should sound like
• Remember that there is no right or wrong answer
• Grading
  – Sensational = 5
  – Better than expected = 4
  – Expected response = 3
  – Worse than expected = 2
  – Unable to answer = 0 / 1
  – Needed to use another example
• Remove applicants from consideration with red flag answers
Pitfalls

• Need to focus and agree on important attributes
• May require more interview time
• May not allow as many interviews
• Faculty buy in / commitment
• Applicants may dislike process
• May cloud the ranking process
• May find many undesirable applicants
• Need training / workshop
• Trial use first?
Moving forward

• Decide if this is the path we would like to follow
• Analyze the resident’s job (get residents involved?)
• Determine desirable attributes
• Work together to learn how to write good questions
• Determine interview flow, duration
• Determine how to compare applicants
• Design score sheet / determine criteria for the do not rank list
• Feedback from faculty and applicants