



## If You're Considering Being Pre-Med . . .

Students who think they might be destined for a career in medicine will be interested to know that the Medical College Admissions Test (M.C.A.T.) is changing. As of 2015, this standardized multiple choice test required by almost all U. S. medical schools will add sections covering psychology, sociology, and biochemistry. The writing section is being eliminated, while the sections covering physical science, biological science, and verbal reasoning will remain. In conjunction with these changes, undergraduate courses required for pre-med students will begin to include the additional subjects. The change initiated by the Association of American Medical Colleges derives from a conviction that educating students in the social sciences will make them better physicians in the future.

Although the majority of medical school applicants are science majors in college, in recent years, many medical schools have been making a concerted effort to fill their classes with some students who majored in social sciences or humanities as undergraduates. It is often believed that such individuals will bring a more humanistic approach to the practice of medicine.

New York City's Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai has a special "Humanities in Medicine Early Acceptance Program" whereby students majoring in humanities in top liberal arts colleges and research universities may apply at the beginning of their sophomore year of college. They will then be required to take eight weeks of classes at Mount Sinai the summer following their junior year. These students are not required (or permitted) to take the M.C.A.T. exam, but their admission to Mount Sinai's medical school is based in part on the standardized tests they took prior to college admission. This is a wonderful opportunity for pre-med students with strong interests outside of the sciences, but it is highly selective. The 30 students most recently admitted through this program from 600 applicants averaged 3.75 grade point averages and had average S.A.T. scores of 1440 for Critical Reading and Math. ACT scores averaged 31 to 35. For more information on this program, see:

<http://www.mssm.edu/education/medical-education/programs/humanities-and-medicine-early-acceptance-program/about-us>.

Other special opportunities top students should be aware of are combined BS/MD programs and early assurance programs that some medical schools have in conjunction with specific undergraduate colleges. The most competitive are the BS/MD programs whereby medical schools offer admission to a small number of applicants based exclusively on their high school records. The main advantages these programs confer are the opportunity to enjoy the college years without worrying about getting into medical school later, and in some (but not all) cases, the opportunity to avoid the M.C.A.T. Even those

schools that do require their BS/MD students to take the M.C.A.T. generally require a lower score to stay in the program than would be needed to enter later on. Also, a number of these programs enable students to complete college and medical school in a total of seven instead of eight years by shortening the undergraduate experience. Of course, saving a year can translate into a significant financial saving.

The students who are admitted to medical school based solely on their high school record have mostly scored in the 700s in each section of the SAT as well as in subject tests in math and biology or chemistry. The majority of them have also demonstrated leadership, shadowed a doctor, and engaged in real science research as well as substantial and meaningful volunteer work. A must-read for anyone potentially interested in pursuing this combined degree is Todd A. Johnson's book entitled *BS/MD Programs - The Complete Guide: Getting into Medical School from High School* published by College Admissions Partners. In it Johnson gives detailed information about each one of these programs as well as information applicable to all of them.

An appealing alternative for students at some undergraduate institutions is the opportunity to gain a guarantee of admission to a particular medical school during their sophomore year of college, thereby eliminating much of the anxiety engendered by the usual application process. For instance, qualified sophomores at Tufts, Brandeis, Boston College, College of the Holy Cross and Northeastern may be granted such early assurance of admission to Tufts University School of Medicine, and qualified students at Rutgers may be granted early assurance of admission to medical school at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. A good way to learn more about early assurance as well as seven and eight year combined programs is from this website:

[http://www.minimedicalschool.com/BA\\_MD\\_programs.html](http://www.minimedicalschool.com/BA_MD_programs.html)