

*Recruitment and Applications*  
*from Grad School through Early Career*

**The Applicant's Point of View: The Interview**

Presented by Timothy Ritter, PhD, DABR, FAAPM

# Disclosures

I'm a therapeutic medical physicist at Virginia Commonwealth University and the Department of Veterans Affairs. I also perform work under AHRQ grant 1R01HS026486-01 in collaboration with UCLA.

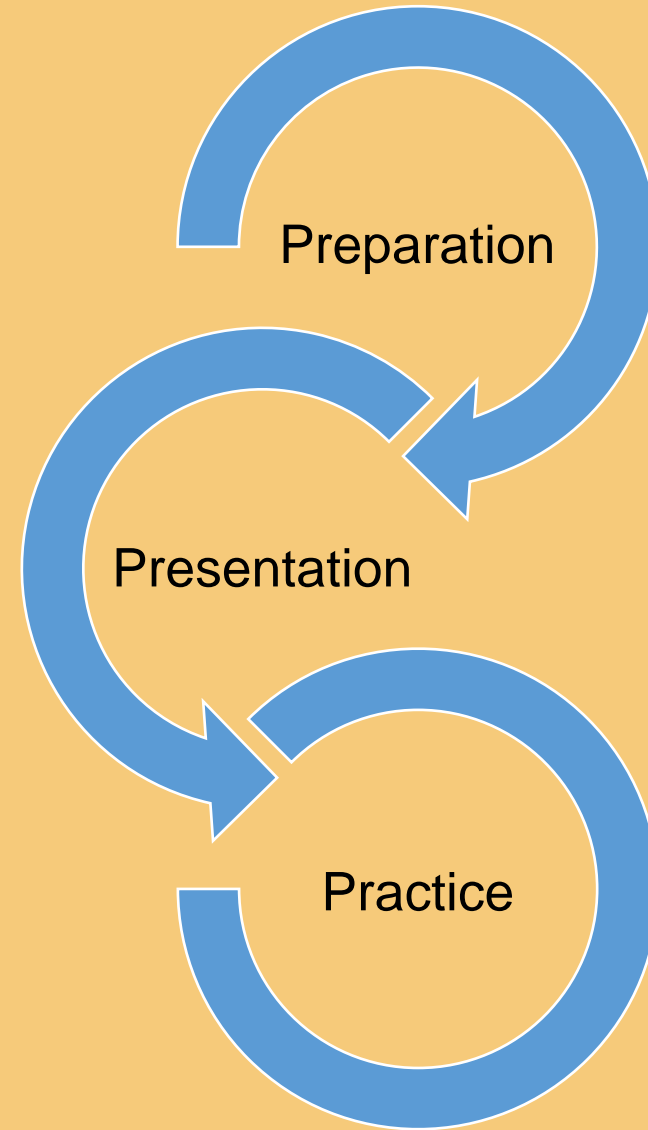
# Additional Disclosure

**I'm a medical physicist..... not a job interview coach.**

But I have had training in interview techniques, and I have experience as a job candidate and employer.

# Outline

- Background
- Preparation
- Presentation
- Practice
- Wrap up



# Interviews

- ❑ May be structured or unstructured

Discussed in detail by Dr. Juang

- ❑ May take different approaches

Behavioral Interview

*The interviewer will ask questions that are centered on your past work experience or education. In your answer, you provide an example where your past behavior demonstrates the particular trait or skill they are looking for.*

**Example:** *“Tell us about a time when you missed something on a treatment plan check. How did you react?”*

# *PAY ATTENTION TO THIS*

## Behavioral Interview

*The interviewer will ask questions that are centered on your past work experience or education. In your answer, you provide an example where your past behavior demonstrates the particular trait or skill they are looking for.*

# Interviews

- May take different approaches (cont'd)

## Situational interview

*The interviewer will present a hypothetical, real-life situation and ask what you would do. You must describe how you would react.*

**Example:** *“You are handed five charts at the end of the day for a physics check and they all start tomorrow morning. What do you do?”*

# *Interviews*

- May take different approaches (cont'd)

## Working interview

*The interviewer asks you to actually do the job and they critique the result to see if you are competent.*

***Example:*** “Perform a plan check on this VMAT SBRT treatment plan.”



# *Interviews*

## You may meet with:

- Future supervisor(s), future colleagues, and future direct reports
- Human resources staff
- Fellow applicants
- Senior leadership

## Under a variety of formats:

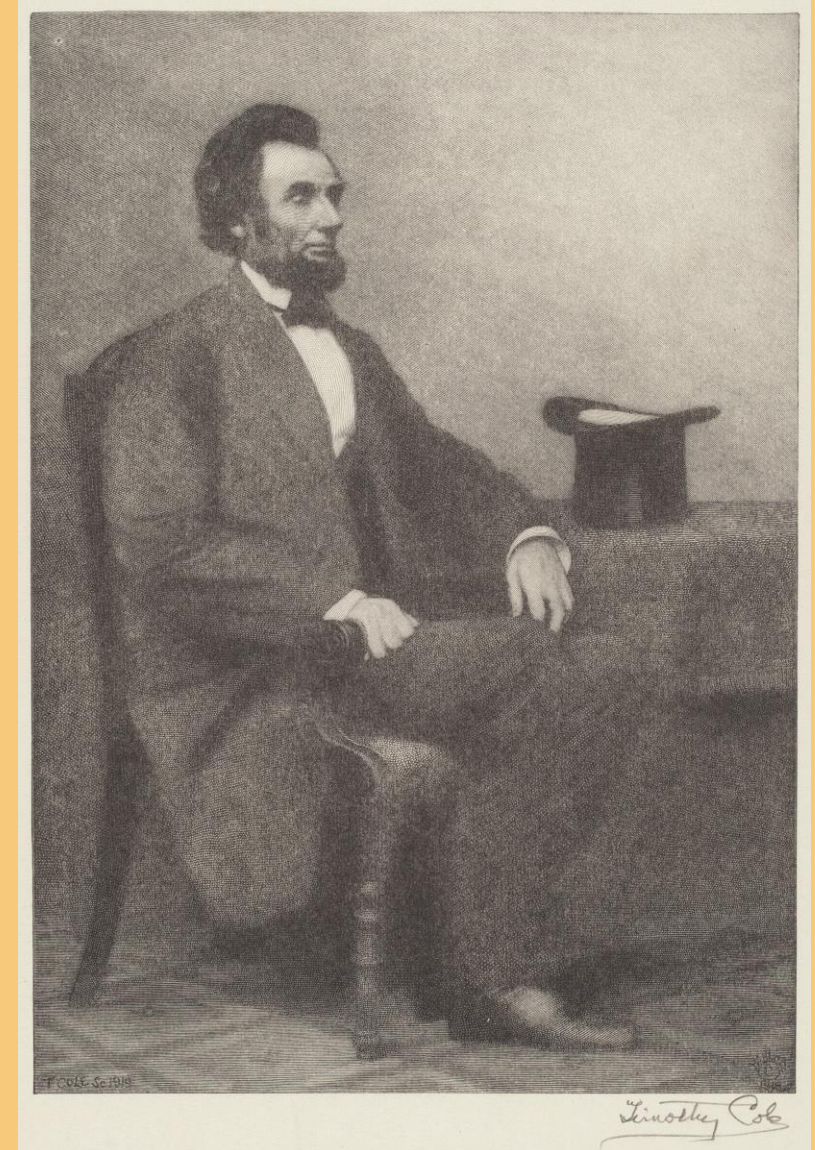
- One-on-one
- Panel or group
- In-person or distance / virtual

# Preparation

***“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”***

Abraham Lincoln

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# *Preparation*

## Do your homework

### Learn about the company or organization

*Why?* Helps you converse with the interviewers and identify questions you want to ask (later in the interview).

*What?* History, services provided, locations, press releases, news articles

*Example: Does the organization participate in clinical trials?*

# Preparation

## ☐ Do your homework (cont'd)

### Learn about the people you will be interviewing with

*Why?* Helps you relate to and converse with your interviewers.

*What?* Education, published works, presentations, LinkedIn (but don't stalk!)

*Example: Search AAPM or ASTRO for presentations / publications*

# Preparation

## □ Do your homework (cont'd)

### Learn about the job

*Why?* Identify the skills/experience you want to emphasize during the interview and the questions you want to ask (later in the interview).

*What?* Get job description, talk to HR, use networking to find out more

The above homework will enable you to talk intelligently with your interviewers even if you don't have the gift of gab.

In addition, it will convey to the interviewers that you took the interview seriously!

# *Preparation*

## **Identify the messages you want to deliver**

- Address skills and capabilities relevant to the job
- Narrow it down to three or four central messages

## **Prepare anecdotes to deliver those messages**

- Focus on positive stories describing goals accomplished, challenges overcome, problems solved, stuff that employers want to hear!
- Nothing shallow here, demonstrate depth of character
- Do not denigrate anyone else

# *Preparation*

## ☐ **Prepare anecdotes to deliver those messages (cont'd)**

- Clever, tasteful humor is a plus but don't force it
- If you have some blemish on your record, develop a **positive** response that could alleviate an employer's concern should it come up
- No more than two minutes per story

## ☐ **Identify materials you want to have ready**

- CV and reference letters are standard
- Materials that communicate your central messages such as published papers, commissioning reports, software you developed, etc.

# *Preparation*

## Identify questions you want to ask

- These become apparent during your preparation
- Job responsibilities, work environment, hardware/software, promotions, support staff
- Ask these later in the interview....set the hook first, then reel in!
- Questions on salary, benefits, parking etc are usually kept for last



# Presentation

No!



Yes!



# *Presentation*

## **YOUR PRESENTATION IS HOW YOU WILL APPEAR TO YOUR INTERVIEWERS**

### **☐ It includes your physical appearance**

- Don't toil over this, but when in doubt "round up"
- How does the boss dress?
- If you have to ask yourself whether it's appropriate, it's not
- If you feel confident in your appearance it will come through

# Presentation

## ☐ It includes your message delivery

- Do you speak clearly using positive language?
- “Like,” “Umm,” “you know” can be unlearned (substitute a pause if needed)
- Do you pause for someone to ask a question?
- **Do you listen enough?**
- Record yourself and listen and/or ask a trusted friend
- Identify any deficiencies
- The next phase, practice, allows you to address deficiencies

# *Presentation*

## It includes your body language

- Posture conveys confidence
- Eye contact (but not constant eye contact)
- If you're interviewing in person, hold materials in your left hand so your right hand is free (to shake hands, open doors, etc)
- Avoid crossing your arms or having something in front of you (conveys defensiveness)
- Avoid fidgeting
- Hand motions are OK, even good, if they are natural

# Practice

***“Life doesn’t give you all the  
practice races you need.”***

**Jesse Owens**

*Image from Library of Congress with no known copyright  
restrictions.*



# *Practice*

- Solidify your preparation and increase confidence**
  
- Work on identified weaknesses in presentation**
  
- Approaches**
  - Rehearse your stories / anecdotes
  - Practice using standard interview questions
  - Create interview questions based on the job description
  - Record yourself (video and audio)

# Practice

## ☐ STAR method of answering a question

### SITUATION

*“We were commissioning a new SRS system....”*

### TASK

*“I led a small team tasked with measuring and verifying outputs factors for small fields”*

### ACTION

*“I started by reviewing IAEA TSR-483 and then reading TG-155. We only had one suitable detector so I arranged to borrow.....”*

### RESULT

*“We acquired and validated the measurement results in one long weekend. Our values agreed to published results within 2% for...” **Here is an example of the commissioning report.***

# Practice

☐ Be ready to answer standard questions such as:

***“Tell me about yourself.”*** – be ready with the “elevator speech” that mostly focuses on your education, training, and experience and lets them know you are the right person for the job opening.

***“What are your strengths?”***

***“What are your weaknesses?”***

***“Describe some of your greatest accomplishments?”***

***“Why do you want to leave your current job?”***



# *What About Virtual Interviews?*

- All of the previous preparation applies (including presentation).**
- Find a quiet place that is tasteful, with proper lighting, and make sure you won't be disturbed.**
- Test out the technology well in advance.**
- Look into the camera and speak slowly.**
- Have a backup plan (phone numbers, pdf of any presentation sent in advance, etc.)**

# *Wrap Up*

## **HOW LONG WILL ALL THIS TAKE?**

- Research the company, people, and job opening.**
- Identify the main points you want to get across.**
- Have targeted anecdotes ready.**
- Finalize your clothes, technology, and materials well in advance.**
- Prepare important questions and how/when you will present them.**
- Practice to gain confidence and correct weaknesses in presentation.**
- Consider a process-oriented goal: *“I will perform eight hours of prep and then finish it up.”***

# *Don't Let Anything Surprise You*

**“Psychological Tests, An 8000-word Essay and Your First-Born Child: What Job Interviews Demand These Days”**

headline from the satirical news source *The Daily Mash*, 05 July 2022

*“To prove jobseekers' worth, some employers are asking candidates to work before they're even hired – sometimes, on tasks that take hours, even days.”*

from *“The ‘Working’ Job Interviews that Go Too Far,”* BBC, 16 May 2022

# *Useful References*

- ❑ Bolles, Richard N., 2022 WHAT COLOR IS YOUR PARACHUTE? 2022: Your Guide to a Lifetime of Meaningful Work and Career Success. [S.I.]: TEN SPEED.
- ❑ <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing>
- ❑ <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/100-potential-interview-questions>

# Questions?

# Thank you for your attention!