
SO YOU'VE GRADUATED NOW WHAT? A NEW GRAD'S GUIDE TO THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

BY: ROBERT GLEASON, CMD, TEMILOLUWA ESHO, BS, CMD, HASAN WAZIR AND MELISA PHUNG

It's August, and you've made it to graduation. You've just spent a year or years at an accredited medical dosimetry program. Nearly every day was spent going to your assigned clinical site training and studying. Throughout the year(s), you've learned treatment planning, contouring, and data entry. Countless hours have been spent with dosimetrists and the radiation oncology team, refining your skills to the point where you feel ready start your career as a dosimetrist. But alas, the hard part isn't done yet. You still must land that first professional opportunity. If you weren't offered a position by your clinical site you will have to write a resume and kick off the arduous interview process. These interviews may consist of spending most of the day at a hospital being interviewed by the chief dosimetrist, the other dosimetrists, the chief physicist, sometimes other physicists, attending physicians, and human resources. During this process you will be asked many questions, and it can be nerve-racking to try to figure out appropriate responses. Interviewing for a job can be very scary and stressful. Wouldn't it be nice if you had a general idea of possible interview questions and received some tips and tricks on what to say and not to say? In order to provide some help and insight, we asked two recent dosimetry graduates about their experiences interviewing at different centers.

As a new graduate, how many interviews did you have during your hiring process? Were the interviews, virtual, phone or onsite interviews?

Seven. The interview was in person with the chief dosimetrist and then online with the rest. (MP)

Six. Most interviews were by phone. Two of them were virtual, and only one of the virtual interviews was formal. (HW)

If you went onsite, did the hospital pay for your travel expenses?

I did go on site, and no, my expenses were not paid. (MP)

Two of the interviews were on site. No travel expenses were paid as I happened to be in town for both. (HW)

During your interview, did you meet with multiple people or just one? How long did the interview last?

The interview was with seven different people and each lasted about 10 -20 minutes. First, I interviewed with the chief dosimetrist and then the other dosimetrists. (MP)

I have been through 6 interview processes with different sites. The interview lengths varied based on the degree of formality. Usually, they were between an hour and 2 hours, and they were formatted as a large conference call. Only one site had interviews with different people throughout the day. (HW)

What were the main areas of planning and treatment sites that were most important to be proficient in as a new graduate and what were some of the sites and techniques that were less concerning or not addressed?

I was mainly asked about prostate and breast with secondarily discussed head and neck, CNS and Lung. During my interview process, the interviewers were less concerned with special cases, specifically TBI, SRS, SBRT, and Sarcomas. (MP)

I was commonly asked about head and neck planning. Some centers valued pelvis/prostate cases. There were also a few thoracic/lung centered questions. But all together head and neck was the most popular site. (HW)

At what point in the interview/hiring process was salary discussed?

Salary was discussed when interviewing with human resources. (MP)

Salary was discussed with HR at the very end of the interview process. (HW)

Were you expected to run a treatment plan for your interview?

Running a treatment plan was not necessary for my interview. (MP)

Treatment planning was not needed. (HW)

Did you find it harder to get an interview due to lack of experience and not being board certified?

No, I did not. (MP)

Yes, having no experience was a bit of a problem. A lot of centers asked for 2-3 years of experience. However, I was still able to get a lot of interviews despite that. (HW)

Based upon your recent experience, what advice would you share with new graduate dosimetrists about the experience and how they can be prepared for their future interviews?

Write a good resume and cover letter. For both, be in-depth with your planning skills and sites. Practice interview questions, and always seek help and advice from fellow dosimetrists. (MP)

First, be prepared. Be sure to go over the basics of every treatment site you have learned about. Once that is established, be sure to know what your most difficult case was and which treatment site you found the easiest. Second, ask your program advisor for common interview questions and then rehearse those questions out loud with friends. Practice will help make you calm and less nervous about the questions as nervousness can lead to forgetfulness. Third, do not get discouraged by your first few interviews because there will be more, and they will go smoother with time. Lastly, learn about benefits and how to negotiate salary. (HW)