Brandeis University Pre-Health Advising
Fall 2015

MD/PhD: Right for me?
MD-PhD curriculum is a continuum

Years 1-2: Mostly Med School
Some Grad School

Years 3-6: Some Med School
Mostly Grad School

Years 7-8: Mostly Med School
Some Grad School

Integrating medicine and science

Preclinical (years 1 - 2) Complete Step 1 exam
• Medical sciences & explore research opportunities (lab rotations)

Research (years 3 - 6) Complete PhD degree
• Conduct dissertation research with opportunities for clinical experiences

• Clinical (5 - 7 or 6 - 8) Complete MD degree
• Clinical clerkships
• Additional research experiences

What is the MD/PhD?
Students in MD/PhD programs complete both degrees at the end of their program. There are a handful of DO/PhD programs as well. The degree path/timing is the same.

95%+ go on to complete a residency program (3-7+ years depending on specialty).

68% go on to work in academia (teaching/research), 16% go into private practice, 5% go on to work at a Research Institute (NIH), 8% go on to work in Industry (Pharmaceutical, biotech, etc.).
What is the catch?

Pros

• Research oriented.
• Faster completion than MD/DO and PhD separately.
• Most programs will provide a stipend through both MD and PhD programs. (Costs/loans are less than separate completion of MD and PhD.)

Cons

• You do not need a PhD to do research as a physician (MD or DO).
• You will get LESS clinical experience than regular MD/DO’s.
  • At one school only 10% of MD/PhDs end up doing clinical work while working on their PhD.
Application Tips: Research

- Research is encouraged as an undergraduate.
  - Hypothesis driven research is best (not just descriptive research).
    - Have you experienced failure in research? How did you respond to that? Write it down!
  - Summer research is encouraged.
    - Not necessary between 1st and 2nd year of college.
    - A senior thesis is not required, but again, encouraged.

- Longitudinal research can be helpful.
  - Work in the same lab for 1-2 years

- Spending a year or two after graduation doing research can be helpful.

- Publication is not required, but can be important
  - this factor will vary by school

- Presentations, particularly at scholarly meetings, can also be beneficial.
Application Tips: GPA & MCAT

- 60% of matriculating MD/PhD students have a GPA of 3.6 or higher.
- 80% of matriculating MD/PhD students have a 3.5+ CUM GPA.
- The median is 3.8 CUM GPA.
- 90% of matriculating MD/PhD candidates have an MCAT of 30 or higher (79th percentile).
- Below the 79th percentile may be challenging to get in without significant strengths in other areas.
Application Tips: Majors & Essays

• No required major (or minor).
• Multiple majors are not necessary.
  • In fact, multiple majors can detract from research opportunities unless they are directly related.
• Depth in one major can be more important than breadth in multiple.

• MD/PhD Applications require 3 essays as part of the initial/primary application
  • Personal Statement (standard for any medical school application)
  • Why MD/PhD?
  • Most Significant Research Experience
Application Tips: Other Stuff that can improve your application

• Rigorous Curriculum; Postbac or Master’s degree can help
• Strong letters of recommendation
• Focus
• Maturity & Integrity
• Commitment/Perseverance
• Curious/Creative – show initiative and drive
• Team player and strong communication skills
• Leadership experience
• Early Application (submit before July 4\textsuperscript{th}; complete by August 1\textsuperscript{st})
Other Paths?

• PhD first and then MD or DO.
• Traditional MD (or DO), then enter/transfer into PhD while in medical school.
• Traditional MD or DO with research as a component of the degree.
Additional Resources

- Handouts: contact the alumni
- AAMC “MD-PhD: Is it Right for Me?” slides
- AAMC MD/PhD Dual Degree Training Website
- AAMC Tools for MD/PhD Applicants website
- American Physician Scientists Association Career Paths/Training Programs Site for programs in Humanities & Social Sciences
- Check for Summer Undergraduate Research Programs (SURF) or MD/PhD exploration programs
- Check for Postbaccalaureate Research Education Programs (PREP) such as those at the NIH.
- NIH website
Contact Pre-Health Advising

• By email at pha@brandeis.edu
• Make an appointment online or by calling Academic Services at 781-736-3470.
• Stop by Academic Services (Usdan 130) for Quick Questions Drop-In Appointments, Monday – Friday, 1:30-2:30pm.