

Preparing for Medical Professions

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to be a pre-med major to apply to health professions schools?

No, in fact there is no such thing as a “pre-med major” at Mount Holyoke, nor do you need to major in a science to qualify for admission to health professional schools. While many applicants to schools in the health professions are science majors, these schools are very receptive to non-science majors, recognizing the diversity of background such applicants represent. Admissions committees are looking for the well-rounded, interesting student; someone who brings a variety of experiences and who has obviously made a deliberate, well-informed decision about her choice of career. All applicants must show strong records in the specific courses, standardized tests, and clinical experiences that are set forth as requirements for admission.

What kind of support does Mount Holyoke provide to pre-health students?

Pre-health advising is available to you beginning your first semester, throughout your four years here, as well as once you become an alumna. The Pre-health Director and the Committee on Health Professions provide advice and guidance on choosing courses, planning internships, selecting schools, preparing for standardized entrance exams, working through the application process, and practice interviews. Your pre-health advisor will also write a composite letter of recommendation for you, which provides a comprehensive summary of all aspects of your preparation, including coursework, internships, research, entrance exam scores, and comments contained in your individual recommendation letters. All students should formally declare their intentions to the Committee no later than March 30th of the year in which they are planning to begin their application.

What are the most important criteria for getting into health professions school?

Your job is to stand out. Major in a discipline where you will thrive, get involved in extracurricular activities, athletics, community service, leadership, and research. Admission to graduate training in the health professions is highly competitive, but also does not follow a set formula. Admissions committees review an applicant’s entire package, and while GPA and standardized exam scores are both very important, so are your essays, clinical experience, extracurricular involvement, and interview.

What are entrance exams, and how should students prepare for them?

Most health professions schools require you to submit results from a standardized exam as part of your application. What exam you take depends on the school you are applying to. You must consult directly with each school’s published requirements to determine which test to take. The exams currently in use are: Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), Dental Admissions Test (DAT), Graduate Record Exams (GRE), Optometry Admissions Test (OAT), and the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT). The official web sites associated with these exams provide practice questions, study suggestions, and even on-line practice tests. Bookstores also carry exam preparation guides published by Barons, Princeton Review, Kaplan, and others. Through partnership with the CDC, Kaplan offers prep courses and practice exams on campus at reduced rates. What combination of these preparation strategies you employ is up to you.

How many MHC students apply to health professions schools, and where do they enroll?

MHC students and alumnae are successful at gaining entrance to excellent graduate programs in a variety of health professions, including allopathic and osteopathic medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and public health. While many matriculate into health professions programs immediately after graduating from MHC, others choose to take a year or two to pursue other interests. This is a common trend nationally, with the result that the average age of entering medical students in the U.S. is 26. In the most recently completed application cycle, 48 MHC students and alumnae applied to health professions programs. In recent years, MHC graduates have been accepted into graduate health professions programs at: Albert Einstein, Boston University, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Drexel, George Washington, Harvard, Howard, Indiana, Johns Hopkins, Michigan State, Mount Sinai, Penn State, Princeton, SUNY Buffalo, SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Upstate, Temple, Texas A&M, Tufts, UCSF, UCONN, University of Florida, UMASS, University of Pennsylvania, University of Rochester, University of Vermont, University of Washington, Vanderbilt, Yale, and others.

Where can I find more information?

Start with the resources at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/cdc/9433.shtml> and sign up to receive pre-health email announcements at: <https://mtholyoke-csm.symplicity.com/students/index.php?cck=1&au=&cck>