

# PRIMES

Monthly Newsletter

In partnership with



**Mentoring**  
in Medicine

## PANDEMIC PREMEDS

Last semester was challenging to say the least. The pandemic caused enormous disruption and hardship to everyone's life. Premed students were particularly impacted--classes transitioned to online learning, extracurricular activities halted, and even the MCAT was temporarily suspended. Life as we know it changed dramatically. Though hardships have entailed, don't let these uncertain times detract you from your goals of keeping on the journey to medical school. The study skills you develop now and grades you earn will follow you through your application to medical school. Now more than ever, the tools and strategies of PRIMES are important in setting the stage for success. We are always here to support you, please

## HEALTH LEADERS

*"As the first person in my family and community to pursue medicine, I found people have especially looked to me to answer health related questions during COVID-19. Though challenging, I continue to promote social distancing, among my family and friends."*

- current medical student

reach out with any questions or concerns!

And always remember as a future healthcare professional, people will look to you for guidance. Encourage frequent handwashing, wearing masks, and socially distancing. The CDC has even issued certain recommendations for college students returning to dorms or campus classrooms. These include being sure to wipe down your desk with disinfectant, avoid placing your personal items (e.g. cell phone) on your desk, and skipping seats or rows to create physical distance between other students during lecture. Also, be sure to frequently wash cloth masks in the warmest appropriate water setting for the fabric. Stay healthy PRIMES Community!

### BACK-TO-COLLEGE TIPS

Protect Yourself from COVID-19

#### Watch your distance

Stay at least 6 feet apart from others, when possible



#### Wash your hands

or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol



#### Wear a mask

in public spaces and common areas



The more closely you interact with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

# From the New Program Manager...

Greetings! My name is Annaclaire Brodnick and I am thrilled to be assuming the (new) role of the PRIMES Program Manager as we expand our mentorship program nationally. By way of background, I just finished medical school at St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies and I am currently applying to residency programs. Before medical school, I was a Teach for America Corps Member and taught 6th grade math and science in Hawaii. And yes, as everyone asks, Hawaii is truly amazing. But no, I did not surf.

I have spent the past two years finishing medical school rotations at various hospitals throughout the US. It has been incredible to experience so many different hospital systems and patient populations. My recent travels aside, I am a born and raised New Yorker. I attended Cornell University in Ithaca, NY where I studied Human Development. I am passionate about education inequity and excited to be joining the PRIMES team for the next year. I could not be joining at a better time, as recent events have significantly highlighted the negative consequences of the healthcare disparities in our country. In the year to come, I hope to successfully help PRIMES reach even more students, meanwhile share my advise and experience as a recent medical school graduate. My journey to medical school was non-traditional. I completed my premedical requirements through a post-baccalareate and the first two years of medical school abroad. I was seeking an adventure and loved the idea of studying medicine in a new country. I was also sold on the idea of doing premed/medical school on a tropical island. The location definitely helped with stress reduction! The

**Perseverance is key in every step to becoming a doctor.**

path has been an adventure indeed, but rewarding and gratifying. It's important to embrace every step of the process because it is a long journey and lifelong commitment. Studying medicine abroad taught me to keep a positive attitude, adapt to new situations, and never give up. Perseverance is key in every step to becoming a doctor. And after all the years of hard work, I always remind myself it is a privilege to take care of others. Never lose sight of your goals! The journey is truly an adventure, embrace each part of the process. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions (anb4015@med.cornell.edu)

## Pictures of My Medical School Journey



Rotating at Grenada General Hospital, 2018. In Grenada they let medical students where long coats!



My official last day of medical school this past summer! We wore surgical masks on top of N95s in the Emergency Department at Brooklyn Hospital.

# BACK-TO-COLLEGE TIPS FROM THE CDC

## Protect Yourself from COVID-19

### DORM

- Avoid sharing items with roommates or others.
- If you do, clean and disinfect before sharing or using.

### SHARED BATHROOM

- Avoid placing toothbrushes directly on counter surfaces.
- Use totes for personal items to limit contact with other surfaces in the bathroom.

### CLASSROOM

- Enroll in online classes if they fit your educational needs.
- Wipe down your desk with a disinfectant wipe if possible.
- Skip seats or rows to create physical distance between other students.
- Avoid placing your personal items (e.g., cell phone) on your desk.

### DINING HALL & MEALS

- Avoid sharing food, drink, utensils or other items with people.
- Pick up grab-and-go options for meals if offered.
- Avoid buffets and self-serve stations.

### LAUNDRY ROOM

- Clean and disinfect surfaces that others have touched (e.g., buttons on the washing machine).
- Wash masks in warmest appropriate water setting for the fabric.



### BEFORE YOU GO OUT, TAKE THE FOLLOWING:

- Mask
- Tissues
- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfection wipes (if possible)

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

# STAYING ENGAGED & MOTIVATED WITH SCHOOL DURING COVID-19

Staying engaged means being able to stay focused, motivated, and persistent with your academic work. People often don't realize that staying engaged requires managing stress in a way that you are not avoiding your work to avoid feeling stressed meanwhile you are not so stressed out by your work that you are too overwhelmed to be effective.

College, particularly being a premed, can be stressful. There requires a certain amount of stress to be engaged, it helps you to stay energized and focused. However, too much stress can cause you to burn out. Stress is a spectrum. You may know some friends who don't seem to care about how they do in school, they are not

experiencing enough stress. On the other hand, those who seem to be stressed about school all the time end up feeling overwhelmed, but too much leads to diminishing returns. Our peak performance is thus somewhere in between these two extremes. Some stress actually results in better performance. This is where you find both optimal performance and personal satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic may be very stressful for students. Social distancing and online learning can make people feel isolated and lonely, which in turn increases stress and anxiety. However, coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, and the people you care about, and your community stronger. (cdc.gov).

It's important to understand that everyone reacts differently to situations. How you respond to stress during the pandemic can depend on your background, social support, financial situation, and many other factors. During times of increased social distancing people can still maintain social connections and care for their mental health. Phone calls, or video chats can help you and your loved ones feel socially connected, less lonely or isolated. It's important to feel socially connected, despite physical distance. (CDC.gov)

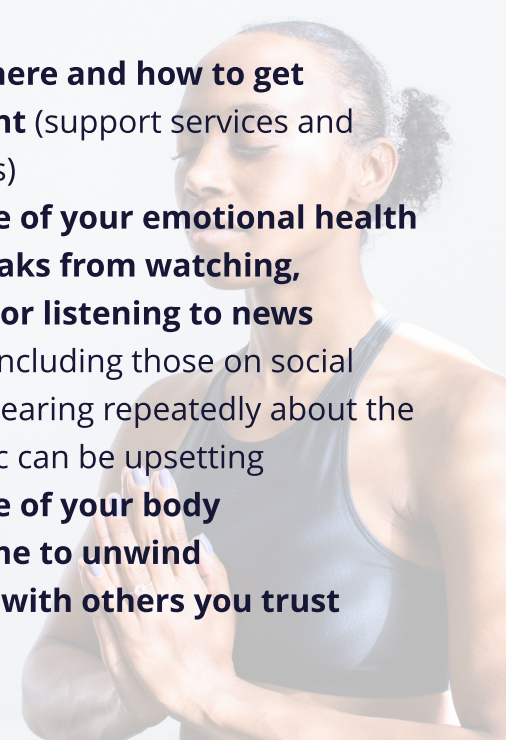
While people who go into medicine typically have tendencies to take care of others. However it's important to remember, you can't take care of anyone else if you can't take care of yourself.

## Stress during disease outbreak can sometimes cause the following:

- fear and worry about your own health and the health of loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health or mental health conditions
- Increase use of tobacco and/or alcohol and other substances

## HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS:

- **Know where and how to get treatment** (support services and resources)
- **Take care of your emotional health**
- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories** (including those on social media); hearing repeatedly about the pandemic can be upsetting
- **Take care of your body**
- **Make time to unwind**
- **Connect with others you trust**



# Know Where to Get Help...



## IMMEDIATE CRISIS

- Call 911
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or Lifeline Crisis Chat

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Contact your college/university, every institution has counselors or places they refer students (typically free!)

## MAXIMIZE E-LEARNING WITH HELPFUL APPS

### Organization

- **"My Study Life"** app - allows you to keep track of classes, exams, and assignment, and assignment progress

### Making Connections

- **Linkedin** - clean up your profile and explore the networking app!

### Mental Wellbeing

- **Headspace** - for guided meditations
- **Woebot** - a cognitive behavior therapy app can help you sort through complicated emotions
- **Talkspace** - connects you with real-life therapist

## Real Talk: Advice from someone studying for the MCAT

"I definitely think that this is a strange and difficult time but its also a time that I feel reminds us of why we are interested in science, medicine, and becoming physicians. I think with the current atmosphere of COVID, Black Lives Matter, and the upcoming election, there are definitely a bunch of things that weigh heavily on people's minds and can significantly impact people's lives. I think its important to remind yourself that you should be kind to yourself . Give yourself grace during this time because its a mental and emotional battle as much as a battle of acquiring and storing as much information as possible. I have learned that is okay to reach out to my friends and mentors for help and support when I am feeling overwhelmed. I think that this is a lesson that is applicable not only for undergrad, or the application process but also throughout med school and beyond - the importance of having a strong support system and advocating for yourself is essential."

**"Be kind to yourself as you study for the MCAT...it's okay to reach out to friends and mentors for help & support"**

- Mei (recently graduated from Cornell University and is currently studying for the MCAT)

# GENERAL MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE

The med school application process takes **nearly a full year to complete**. Therefore, planning ahead and having organization is essential. If you are planning to apply next fall to med school (thus, start med school fall 2022), it is important to start planning now. Give yourself plenty of time! Staying on schedule is especially important because most medical schools have rolling admissions. Rolling admissions means that applications are evaluated as they are received. Therefore applying early in the cycle may increase your chance of admission. **Many schools begin interviewing August or September, and some offer acceptances as early as mid-October!** As spots in the class fill up, it may be more difficult to gain admission.

To start, there are three separate centralized application services for U.S. medical schools:

**AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service)** - used by most M.D. schools

**TMSAS (Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service)** - for public medical schools in Texas (M.D. and D.O.)

**AACOMAS (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service)** used by D.O. schools

In addition to submitting a primary application through the services above, most medical schools require a secondary (supplemental) application. The final set in the application process is an interview.

Information adapted from [prehealthadvising.com](http://prehealthadvising.com)

## COVID-19 MCAT EXAM CHANGES

### AAMC MCAT Update:

In attempt to provide testing to as many examinees as possible who want to test in 2020 during the pandemic, the AAMC is temporarily shortening the MCAT exam and offering multiple administrations per test date. A shortened version of the MCAT exam will only be administered through the end of the 2020 testing year.

The exam has been reduced from a total "seated" time of 7 hours and 30 minutes to 5 hours and 45 minutes. The number of scored questions remains the same. Other elements of the exam have been reduced or removed to shorten the seated time, such as the tutorial and end-of-day survey.

## NOV-DEC

- Become familiar with the application process
- Gather info about med schools
- Continue to gain clinical and research experience

## JAN-MARCH

- Request letters of recommendation
- Register for the MCAT (at least 2 months prior to planned test)

## APRIL-JUNE

- Prepare for and take the MCAT (no later than early summer)
- Request copies of transcripts to check for errors
- Begin working on primary applications

## JULY-SEPT

- Take/retake MCAT
- Complete supplemental (secondary) applications - note some come within days of the primary application, others take months
- **Interview season begins** in late July for some schools!

## OCT-DEC

- Continue to interview
- Some med schools notify applicants of acceptances Oct. 15, some even earlier

## JAN-APRIL

- Some schools send additional interview invitations
- Attend "second look" events
- By April 15, applicants to AMCAS should be holding a spot at <3 schools, but may remain on the wait-list for others
- By April 30, applicants should be holding a spot at only one school, but may remain on the wait-lists for other schools

## MAY-SUMMER

- Update schools you are wait-listed at about new activities and accomplishments

## FALL ...

- Finally begin medical school!

# CHANGES TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW...

Applying to medical school this cycle? Now is the time to learn more about [virtual interviewing](#).



On August 4, the AAMC presented a live webinar to engage the medical school applicant community in provide an overview of the AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions Admissions (AAMC VITA™). During the webinar, participants learned about policies, guidelines, and processes; the process for completing AAMC VITA in HireVue; and considerations, tips, and resources for preparing for the AAMC VITA interview It will be used to supplement in-person interviews this year. There's a lot to take-in about this new tool (and, unfortunately, a fair amount of misinformation floating around).

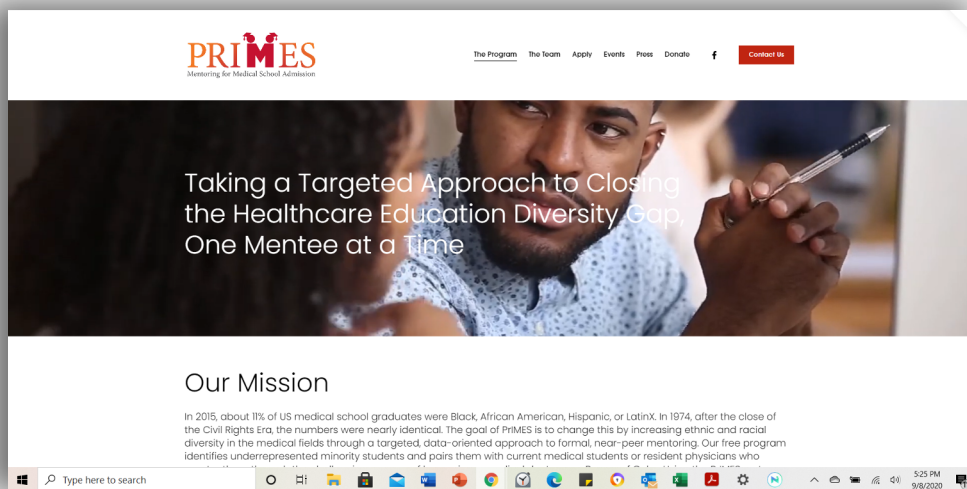
- 1. AAMC VITA was designed to complement the live interview process -- not replace it.** Each participating medical school will determine how and at what stage it will incorporate the AAMC VITA interview into its application review process. Schools can refocus their in-person or live-virtual interviews on understanding how an applicant's interest aligns with the school's mission and devote more time to sharing information with applicants about the institution and surrounding area.
- 2. As with in-person interviews, you must be invited by a medical school to complete the AAMC VITA interview.** Applicants who are selected by at least one school to move forward in the application process will be asked to complete the interview, and they only need to complete it once. That same interview recording will be made available to all additional participating schools that request it from you. [More information on the process can be found here](#). The [list of participating schools](#) is now available.
- 3. There is no scoring, computerized assessment, or artificial intelligence technology involved.** A video recording of your responses to standard questions are provided to medical school admissions staff without evaluation or assessment. As with in-person interviews, schools conduct their own evaluation of the responses within their [holistic review](#) process. You can find more information about what [AAMC VITA measures](#) and [sample questions](#) on the AAMC VITA website.
- 4. If you can use Zoom, Skype, or other video platforms, you can complete the AAMC VITA interview.** The technology requirements are similar to those of the live-video platforms that medical schools will be using in other stages of their interview and selection process. No special equipment is needed. The interview is on-demand—record it at a date and time that is convenient for you. Use [resources developed by the AAMC to prepare for the AAMC VITA](#) the same way you would prepare for an in-person interview; expert tips, sample questions, and a [practice interview](#) are also available. Additionally, we have just released our Prep for Success in Your Virtual Interview webinar, [video](#) and [slides](#), on our [website](#), so you will want to take a look at that, too!
- 5. AAMC VITA was designed with all applicants in mind.** Applicants who require accommodations can request them via the [Request for Accommodations Form on the AAMC VITA website](#). The AAMC has taken steps to minimize the risk of bias within the AAMC VITA interview, including offering unconscious bias training to all medical school staff involved in the admissions process.

## Premed Problems: "I am unable to complete my scheduled volunteer work and physician shadowing. What should I do?"

The AAMC recognizes that prospective applicants are facing challenges in completing experiences such as physician shadowing and volunteer work during this semester. The AMCAS Advisory Committee has encouraged schools to take these challenges into consideration when reviewing applications this cycle and screening for applicants. Please check directly with the medical schools to which you are applying to confirm their requirements. However, if you plan on applying next cycle it is not too early to begin thinking of alternative opportunities to ensure your application is strong.



### CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!



[www.primesmentorship.org](http://www.primesmentorship.org)

### PRIMES IS NOW RECRUITING FOR OUR 2020 MENTEE COHORT

If you know anyone who might be interested, please encourage them to apply today!

[primesmentorship.org/apply](http://primesmentorship.org/apply)

For more information, please contact [primesmentorship@gmail.com](mailto:primesmentorship@gmail.com) or reach out to:



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