How to make your medical school list
Presenter

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Agenda

"I'll go anywhere"
Why that's the wrong approach

How many is too many?
Considerations to keep in mind when deciding how many schools to apply to

What are the different criteria to consider?
Let's start with the stats
WARS - WedgeDawg's Applicant Rating System

Overview of the MSAR
Data on MD Schools

Overview of the ChooseDO Explorer
Data on DO Schools

What about Caribbean Schools?

Mark your calendars!
Important Dates
"I'll go anywhere"

- Understandable but the wrong approach

Why?

- You'll spend at least the next 4 - 8 years there
- School should set you up for success
- Not all med schools are created equally (difference in size, teaching style, grading method, values, etc)
- Applying "anywhere" can lead to fewer acceptances
How many is too many?

- The average # nationally is 17 schools
  - Typical range is between 15 - 30

- More isn't always better
  - Think realistically about how many secondaries you have time to complete
  - Each application has a fee - the more you apply to, the more expensive it'll be
What factors to consider

Let's get into the meat of it!

1. GPA & MCAT, i.e. The Stats
2. Location, location, location!
3. Cost: Show me the money!
4. Does size matter?
5. What's the vision?
The Stats

**GPA & MCAT**

- One of big reasons students don’t get in anywhere is they're not applying to schools that match up with their stats
- **Rule of thumb**
  - **GPA**
    - If your GPA is **0.2 or more points higher** than the average accepted, consider that school an undershoot in the GPA category
    - If your GPA is **0.2 or more points lower** than their average, consider that school a reach in the GPA category
    - If your GPA is **within 0.1 points in either direction**, consider that school on target in the GPA category
  - **MCAT**
    - If your MCAT score is **3 or more points higher** than the average, consider that school an undershoot in the MCAT category
    - If your MCAT score is **3 or more points lower** than their average, consider that school a reach in the MCAT category
    - If your MCAT score is **within 2 points in either direction**, consider that school on target in the MCAT category
The Stats, continued

GPA & MCAT

- **Putting the GPA & MCAT together:**
  - Reach GPA + Reach MCAT = Reach overall
  - Undershoot GPA + Undershoot MCAT = Undershoot overall
  - Reach GPA + Undershoot MCAT = Target overall
  - Undershoot GPA + Reach MCAT = Target overall
  - Reach GPA + Target MCAT = Target overall
  - Target GPA + Reach MCAT = Target overall
  - Undershoot GPA + Target MCAT = Undershoot overall
  - Target GPA + Undershoot MCAT = Undershoot overall
  - Target GPA + Target MCAT = Target overall

**If your GPA or MCAT score is lower than a school's 10th percentile value, you should classify that school as a “reach,” regardless of how high your score is in the other category.**
The Stats, continued

**GPA & MCAT**

- **Try WARS (WedgeDawg Applicant Rating System)**
  - The purpose of the WARS is to create a starting point for a school list
  - The WARS does not assess where an applicant will be accepted
  - It determines the best collection of schools for the applicant to apply to maximize chances of success
  - The following factors are taken into account by the WARS:
    - GPA
    - MCAT
    - Research
    - Clinical Experience
    - Shadowing
    - Volunteering
    - Leadership and Teaching
    - Miscellaneous
    - Undergraduate School
    - Representation in Medicine
    - GPA Trend
GPA & MCAT

- Each of these categories is assigned a score that corresponds to the strength of that portion of the application, weighted, and then summed together. The formula is as follows:
  - ARS Score = (Stats*5)+(Research*3)+(Clinical Experience [9, 5, -10])+(Shadowing [8, -5])+(Volunteering*2)+(Leadership and Teaching*2)+(Miscellaneous*3)+[(Undergrad-1)*3]+[(URM-1)*7]+[(Upward Trend-1)*4]

- This score is then translated to one of 6 categories that applicants are grouped into, which are designated Levels S, A, B, C, D, E in decreasing score order. The score thresholds are as follows:
  - Level S: 85
  - Level A: 80
  - Level B: 75
  - Level C: 68
  - Level D: 60
  - Level E: 0
### GPA & MCAT

**1) Use the descriptions of each level to rate yourself in each category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Research Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Clinical Experience**

| Level 3 | Significant, sustained clinical experience, generally for well over a year. These applicants have demonstrated a strong commitment to clinical endeavors and have exposure in a clinical setting well beyond the average applicant. |
| Level 2 | Moderate clinical experience, generally for well under a year. These applicants have adequate/sufficient experience to clinical activity. |
| Level 1 | Insufficient or no clinical experience. |

**Shadowing**

| Level 2 | Adequate shadowing or greater. |
| Level 1 | Slight or no shadowing experience. |

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**2) Input your score for each category and get a report on what percentage of schools you should apply to in each category (how many "top tier" schools like Harvard vs more "mid range" schools like UVA, etc)**

(2017)
Location, location, location

- You should always, for the most part, apply to or at least consider your state schools
  - Most give preference to in-state students
  - Also cheaper
- Beyond that, ask yourself:
  - Where do I want to be for the next 4 - 8 years?
  - What population do I want to serve?
  - Do I want to practice here after graduation?
Cost

- 73% of all medical students graduating in 2019 reported leaving medical school with student loan debt.
- Most medical students will need to borrow at least some federal student loans to cover the cost of their medical education.
- Here are 10 questions to get the medical school financial aid discussion started:
  - How much does a medical education cost at your school?
  - What was the average amount of debt for the most recent graduating class?
  - Is a supplemental financial aid application required at this school?
  - Do you require parental information to determine a financial aid package?
  - What scholarships and grants are available and when can I apply for them?
  - If I get a scholarship for one year, will it continue to be offered in subsequent years?
  - Does your school offer institutional loans? If you do, what are the terms and conditions and how much of my yearly cost will they cover? Are they awarded each year?
  - How can I cut down on my yearly expenses, costs, and borrowing?
  - Do students who are awarded the AAMC’s Fee Assistance Program qualify for any additional financial aid benefits at your school?
  - Can medical students work part-time while attending this medical school?
Does size matter?

- Some schools have about 400 students, while others teach more than 1,000
- Small schools can give students the "Cheers" effect: Everybody knows your name.
- At a smaller school, you tend to get to know your fellow students and professors more closely
- Bigger schools can mean more opportunities.
  - There's also more choices for rotations
- Large institutions can broaden a student's network and learning experience.
- There's potential for increased diversity among the student body at a big school

(Smith-Barrow, 2015)
What is the mission and vision?

- What are your aspirations as a physician? What are your interests?
- Some schools place a greater emphasis on certain types of extracurriculars, such as research or working with underserved populations.
- Your current experiences and interests should match up with the school's mission and vision.
Let's review the **MSAR (Medical School Admission Requirements)**
Let's review the **ChooseDO Explorer**
A note on Caribbean Medical Schools

- There are roughly 80 of them.
- Unlike their U.S. counterparts, the schools are predominantly for-profit institutions.
- Admissions standards at Caribbean schools tend to be more lax than at schools in the United States.
- Many do not consider scores on the MCAT as a factor in admissions.

**But beware!**
- The residency match rate for international medical graduates is about 60 percent, compared with over 94 percent for U.S. graduates.
- Caribbean schools occasionally misrepresent their accreditation status on their websites.
- It can be challenging to get matched into some of the most competitive specialties.

- 4 Caribbean medical schools, known as “The Big Four,” have a reputation for being the best option for students who will ultimately return to the U.S. for their residency:
  - St. George’s University (SGU)
  - American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine (AUC)
  - Saba University School of Medicine
  - Ross University School of Medicine

**If your stats are competitive for US schools, Caribbean schools should not be on your list. Caribbean schools should be your absolute last resort if possible.**

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Goldberg, E. (2021)
Moon, K. (2020)
Mark your calendars!

Navigating the 2023 AMCAS Application Cycle for Applicants Webinar

April 28th

AMCAS, AACOMAS & TMDSAS Open

May 4th-ish

Earliest date you can submit your application

May 17 - 27-ish

June - August

Most med schools will send out secondary essays

September '22 - April '23

Interviews will take place/ When you'll hear back regarding admission decisions
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Mark your calendars!

April 28th

May 4th-ish

Mark the 2023 AMCAS Application Cycle for Applicants Webinar

May 17 - 27-ish

Mark your calendars!

Apply as early in the cycle as possible!

June - August

Earliest date you can submit your application

Prepare by reading through their applicant guides!

Most med schools will send out secondary essays

September '22 - April '23

Interviews will take place/ When you'll hear back regarding admission decisions

You can prepare for those ahead of time!

Follow up w/ schools with update letters*

*Not all schools accept those. Check in with admissions first!
Questions?

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Work Cited


