

# Interview Skills for Pre-SET and Beyond

**Daniel Daly**  
Upper GI/ HPB Fellow

**Dr Mark Muhlmann**  
Colorectal Surgeon  
Prince of Wales Hospital

9th June 2021

# Outline

- Preparation
- Interview
- Practice Questions



# Preparation

- Know the role and the process
- Know the hospital/ campus
  - Why do you want to work there
  - What is unique about that particular institution?
    - E.g. Prince of Wales- Sarcoma Unit, Hyperbaric Unit, etc.
- Know the interview
  - Format
    - E.g. SET- 5x 10 minute stations, 3x clinical, 2x non-clinical
  - Number/ type of questions



**General Surgery  
Surgical Education &  
Training Program**

## **2021 Selection for 2022 Intake Guidelines**

# Preparation

- Develop list of practice questions and ideal answers
- Clinical
  - Small/ large bowel obstruction
  - Cholecystitis
  - Trauma
- Non-clinical
  - Bullying
  - Underperforming/ impaired colleague (i.e. drunk boss)
  - Informed consent
  - Open disclosure

# Preparation

- Know your audience
  - Be familiar with RACS core competencies
  - RACS position papers
  - ANZJS Editorials
  - Topical issues
- Demonstrate your ambition
- Be a human



This is a screenshot of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, About, Media, Careers, Donate, Contact, Library, and a Sign In button. Below this is the RACS logo and a secondary navigation menu with options like 'Become a surgeon', 'Trainees', 'Fellows', 'SIMGs', and 'Research &amp; audit'. The main content area is titled 'Position papers' and features a sub-header 'As a fellowship based organisation, RACS commits to ensuring the highest standard of safe and comprehensive surgical care for the community we serve through excellence in surgical education, training, professional development and support. The position papers and guidelines of RACS are developed by expert working groups with broad consultation with key stakeholders approval by Council. We encourage creators of health policy to use these position papers and guidelines, with appropriate reference to RACS.' The background of the page shows a faint image of a laptop keyboard and a pie chart.

A

- [Access to Elective Assessment and Surgery](#) (2017)
- [Acute Scrotal Pain and Suspected Testicular Torsion Guidelines](#) (2018)
- [Age, Performance and Revalidation \(PDF 2.13MB\)](#) (2017)
- [Alcohol and Drugs \(Trauma Prevention\)](#) (2017)
- [Alcohol Related Harm](#) (2016)

# Preparation

- Practice/ rehearse at home
- Structured responses
  - Be succinct
  - Strong opening and closing statements
  - 3 key points
  - Use signposting
- Multi-source feedback
  - Peers
  - Consultants
  - Mirror/ Smart Phone
  - Friends, family, strangers at the bus stop

# Preparation

- Teleconferencing
  - Requires new skills and particular considerations
  - Select suitable location: consider light, time of day, background
  - Dress for the occasion (including pants)
  - Eradicate distracting behaviours
  - Practice looking into camera (not at self/ screen/ out the window)
  - Show your personality

# Interview Technique



# Interview

- Preparation is key
- Be punctual
- Project confidence
- Acknowledge difficulties
- Be a human
- Practice makes perfect

# Practice Questions

# Practice Question- Generic (pre-SET)

- We are interviewing 1,001 applicants today, why should we choose you?

# Practice Question- Generic (pre-SET)

- We are interviewing 1,001 applicants today, why should we choose you?
- Opportunity to give a verbal and personal interpretation of your CV, as well as demonstrate your preparation for this interview
- Key messages
  - Enthusiastic and passionate about (General) Surgery
    - e.g. research, teaching, experience
  - Evidence of leadership, communication, and teamwork skills
    - e.g. positions on committees, etc
  - Personal attributes
  - Demonstrate local knowledge of institution

# Practice Question- Generic Clinical

- Complication during operation (usually bleeding, could be any unexpected difficulty)- how do you manage this situation?

# Practice Question- Generic Clinical

- Complication during operation (usually bleeding, could be any unexpected difficulty)- how do you manage this situation?
- Achieve temporary control and slow down/ stop
- Communication, collaboration, teamwork
  - notify Anaesthetist, Scrub Nurse, Assistant
- Ask for help
  - demonstrate awareness of limitations
  - distributive leadership

# Practice Question- Generic Non-Clinical (pre-SET)

- What do you see as your main strengths and biggest weakness?

# Practice Question- Generic Non-Clinical (pre-SET)

- What do you see as your main strengths and biggest weakness?
- Demonstrate insights and ability for self reflection
- Choose weakness carefully
  - describe your strategies to manage or improve upon this
  - don't be annoying



# Practice Question- Non-Clinical

- There has been a great deal of publicity regarding training units losing accreditation over incidents of bullying and harassment.
- What is your opinion regarding this and how do you manage it?

# Practice Question- Non-Clinical

- There has been a great deal of publicity regarding training units losing accreditation over incidents of bullying and harassment.
- What is your opinion regarding this and how do you manage it?
- Demonstrate awareness of issues of bullying and harassment
  - RACS definitions
- Opinion of bullying
  - zero tolerance
  - threatens patient safety, damaging to individual clinicians, damaging to integrity and reputation of profession
  - against RACS core competencies, employer code of conduct, etc
- How do you manage bullying
  - Individual
  - Department/ Hospital
  - Systemic

# Practice Question- Research/ Clinical Governance

- What is your understanding of the “audit cycle”
- What do you understand of levels of evidence, and what is the value of case reports in the surgical literature?
- Why is research participation important for trainees?
- What is credentialing?

# Practice Question- Non-Clinical (SET)

- Your intern is arriving late and not completing jobs as requested. How do you handle this situation?

# Practice Question- Non-Clinical (SET)

- Your intern is arriving late and not completing jobs as requested. How do you handle this situation?
- Outline
  - underperforming colleague; potential “trainee in trouble”
- Considerations
  - patient safety
  - safety of intern
  - interventions

# Practice Question- Clinical

- A 70 year old man comes to see you with a symptomatic right inguinal hernia. It causes him discomfort, but no obstructive symptoms. On examination has an inguinoscrotal hernia that is reducible. He is on apixaban for atrial fibrillation. You arrange to perform an elective inguinal hernia repair. How will you manage his anticoagulation in the peri-operative period?

# Practice Question- Non-Clinical (SET)

- Your consultant is running late for their elective list and asks you to make a start with an open right inguinal hernia repair.
- Full of excitement, you make a start but realise after making a skin incision in the left groin that you are operating on the incorrect side.
- What do you do now?
- What failings have occurred?
- What other processes need to occur?

# Practice Questions- Clinical (SET)

- 55yo man with fever and groin pain on background of poorly controlled diabetes.
  - What is Fournier's gangrene and what are the principals of managing this patient?
- 63yo woman with right upper quadrant pain and fever.
  - Differential diagnoses, investigations, management.
- 12yo boy with sudden onset scrotal pain 3 hours ago
  - Differential diagnoses, investigations, management.