

Cracking Med School Admissions

Top 10 Current Events Interview Guide 2023



Top 10 Current Events for Medical School Interviews 2023

Why should you be plugged into healthcare current events?

The importance of tuning in to your surroundings extends beyond the fact that current events may come up in your medical school interviews. Reading the news and understanding the evolving healthcare landscape will broaden your perspective and make you an informed healthcare professional. Since medical schools are placing more emphasis on an applicant's understanding of the world, our Cracking Med School Admissions team compiled a list of current event resources to help you *ace* your interview and become a better physician. Included with every topic are informative, high-yield articles and their summaries.

We also added "Points and Counter Points (PCP)," which includes op-eds. Reading different opinions and solutions will give you a more comprehensive insight into any given topic.

For medical school interviews, it is important to:

- Read and be knowledgeable about each current event
- Understand different perspectives
- Propose solutions to challenges

What are the top 10 healthcare current events you should know for your medical school interviews?

1. COVID-19 and Effects on Health & Society
2. Vaccinations
3. United States Health Insurance and the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)
4. Mental Health and Physician Burnout
5. Gun Violence & Mass Shootings
6. Abortion and Contraception
7. Cultural Competence in Patient Care and Diversity in Healthcare
8. End-of-life Care
9. Opioid Crisis
10. Artificial Intelligence and Applications to Healthcare

If you have any questions about current events and medical school interviews, email the Cracking Med School Admissions team at info@crackingmedadmissions.com.

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Current Events Topic #1: COVID-19

Emerging in late 2019 in China before rapidly spreading across the entire world, COVID-19 has radically changed normal human interactions. Years later, COVID-19 is still in our lives. And, many applicants find many questions about COVID-19 - past and present issues - in their medical school applications and medical school interviews.

The significant lack of early knowledge resulted in many essential workers putting themselves in harm's way to treat patients and preserve functionality while many researchers and biopharmaceutical companies worked to rapidly develop and deploy surveillance, therapeutics, and vaccine technologies at an unprecedented pace. The pandemic has also served as a philosophical referendum on the many divides that exist in our society.

Popular issues you should be familiar with surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1) The role of physicians in public health
- 2) Mask mandates
- 3) COVID-19 vaccination mandates in hospitals, schools, and workplaces
- 4) Disparities in the healthcare system
- 5) Future pandemic preparedness
- 6) Public health messaging, including the spread of accurate information vs. misinformation
- 7) Long COVID-19

Good Article Reads:

Implications of COVID-19 on our U.S. healthcare system

- <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmsb2021088>

Racial and ethnic health disparities related to COVID-19 and potential solutions

- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2775687>

Disparities among people of color, rural, and LGBTQ+ communities

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8349792/>

Study - Masks cut COVID-19 spread in schools

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/10/health/covid-schools-masks.html>

Preparing healthcare systems for future pandemics

- <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03356-6>

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Great explanation of different long COVID symptoms

- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid-long-haulers-long-term-effects-of-covid19>

Points and Counter Points:

Should COVID-19 be addressed from political or scientific lens?

Scientific: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/09/17/politics-is-wrecking-americas-pandemic-response/>

Political: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/vision/c19-needs-good-politics-too>

Are masks necessary to stop COVID-19 spread or an infringement on liberty?

Necessary: <https://theconversation.com/face-mask-rules-do-they-really-violate-personal-liberty-143634>

Unnecessary: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52540015>

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Current Events Topic #2: Vaccinations

Vaccines became the spotlight as countries raced to develop a vaccine against COVID-19. Once COVID-19 vaccines became available, however, it sparked a debate around vaccine mandates.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a small but outspoken anti-vaccine (anti-vax) group in the United States. Many anti-vaxxers' reasons of not receiving a vaccine center around personal choice, religious preferences, and freedom. Unfortunately, the spread of medical misinformation is still a cause of concern, as parents are worried about their children developing autism after vaccinations – even though this has been disproven several times over the decades.

Good Article Reads:

To understand the scientific basis of how vaccines are developed and approved around the world, review an overview from the World Health Organization.

- <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/how-are-vaccines-developed>

Excellent article quickly summarizing the history of the link between vaccines and autism

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2954080/>
 - For a longer version of the history - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5789217/>

Points and Counter Points:

What are the different viewpoints on vaccination mandates?

Vaccines are not an attack on freedom: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/01/opinion/vaccine-mandates-biden-republicans.html> and <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/forefront.20211029.682797/>

My body, my choice: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/07/04/1109367458/my-body-my-choice-vaccines> and [latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-05-22/vaccine-hesitancy-language-covid](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-05-22/vaccine-hesitancy-language-covid)

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Current Events Topic #3: U.S. Healthcare System Affordable Care Act

The United States spends more on healthcare than other developed countries in the world. Despite this spending, there are still several individuals who do not have health insurance, and the life expectancy in the United States lags behind its peers. On the flip side, the United States is a leader in medical innovation and medical advancements.

The Affordable Care Act, otherwise called “Obamacare” or the “ACA,” is a contentious healthcare law passed in 2010 under the Obama Administration. The ACA is a crucial turning point in healthcare policy to be familiar with. The legislation’s goal was threefold: 1) to democratize healthcare, 2) expand Medicaid, and 3) make innovative healthcare methods more accessible to those who could not previously afford them. The ACA has met significant political opposition for its allegedly socialist principles.

Good Article Reads:

To get a good grasp on American health policy, it is first important to understand the U.S. healthcare system.

- <https://www.interexchange.org/articles/visit-the-usa/understanding-us-healthcare-system/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4193322/> - “A layman’s guide to the U.S. healthcare system”

Next, understand the main components of the Affordable Care Act

- Read this article by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), which succinctly summarizes the main components of the Affordable Care Act.
- Written for physicians - <https://www.acponline.org/advocacy/state-health-policy/help-your-patients-enroll-in-health-insurance/affordable-care-act-issues-physicians-need-to-know>

Points and Counter Points:

Pros and cons of the U.S. healthcare system

- <https://www.theclintoncourier.net/2020/09/14/the-pros-and-cons-of-the-us-health-care-model-the-direct-fee-system/>

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Current Events Topic #4: Mental Health and Physician Burnout

With the proliferation of a digitally connected, but increasingly isolated world, suicide rates and mental illness have been becoming more common among adolescents in America. Since 1960, suicide rates among 15- to 24-year-olds have nearly tripled while access to mental health services remains limited. Solutions for the mental health crisis include finding ways to increase access to mental health services along with more awareness and prevention.

Physician burnout is also a concern. 44% of physicians are suffering from burnout according to the American Medical Association research.

Good Article Reads:

One component of insufficient mental healthcare is a shortage of mental health workers. This article takes a deeper look into the problem and its possible solutions.

- <https://www.kpihp.org/blog/act-now-to-address-the-shortage-of-mental-health-workers/>

This op-ed article classifies mental health, like race and ethnicity, as a component of health disparities. Discussed are comorbidities that impact mental health illness. Read this article to get a broader perspective on the consequences of mental illness and their relation to the healthcare system.

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/upshot/mental-illness-health-disparity-longevity.html>

COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health challenges and burnout in providers, as described below.

- <https://www.wheel.com/blog/the-state-of-burnout-for-mental-health-workers-in-2021>

How can the healthcare system alleviate the mental health epidemic?

- Read this brief [article](#) by the Kaiser Permanente Institute for Health Policy to find out.

Points and Counter Points:

Can you call suicide and mental illness an epidemic?

Yes: <https://www.cchr.org/cchr-reports/the-real-crisis/introduction.html>

No: <https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/couch-crisis/astonishing-non-epidemic-mental-illness>

Is physician burnout a systemic problem?

Yes: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/08/opinion/sunday/hospitals-doctors-nurses-burnout.html>

No: <https://www.dermatologytimes.com/article/physician-burnout-not-thing>

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Current Events Topic #5: Gun Violence & Mass Shootings

Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the United States. Sadly, mass shootings have also frequented the news; 2022 is one of the worst years on record for the number of mass shootings, according to gunviolencearchive.org. Some Americans want stricter gun control laws while others do not. What are solutions to decrease deaths from firearms and to decrease mass shootings?

Good Article Reads:

Get informed with the statistics of gun violence

- <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

Understand the impact of gun violence on children and adolescents, with increases in firearm deaths among Black and Hispanic youth

- <https://www.kff.org/other/issue-brief/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-and-adolescents/>

Gun violence as a public health issue

- <https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/gun-violence-as-a-public-health-issue/>

Ideas for Solutions

- <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/focus-areas/preventing-violence-and-reducing-injury/preventing-violence-advocacy>

Points and Counter Points:

Should we have stricter gun control policies in America?

Split American views on gun policy: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/06/22/views-on-gun-policy/>

Global comparisons of gun policies: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons>

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Current Events Topic #6: Abortion and Contraception

Women's health is another contentious topic in American politics. It has been debated for almost a century, after the establishment of Planned Parenthood, an organization for reproductive services, in 1916. Popular issues around this topic include: abortion (including the landmark Supreme Court ruling in 1973 *Roe v. Wade*), contraception accessibility, the history of the Hyde Amendment, and women's rights regarding their own health. Understanding the legislative history behind the Hyde Amendment and *Roe v. Wade* is key to understanding the political context of abortion in America. Furthermore, abortion and contraception have spurred a discussion on what constitutes "the start of life" and how this could affect women's ability to make independent choices.

Good Article Reads:

This article aptly captures the role and evolution of abortion in the current political climate

- <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/18/us/abortion-laws-states/index.html>

Implications that abortion and contraception have had in women's lives and why potential changes to legislations could fundamentally change women's way of life.

- <https://www.newyorker.com/news/essay/how-abortion-changed-the-arc-of-womens-lives>

Abortion access in the United States with great issue briefs

- <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/press-release/abortion-in-the-united-states/>

Points and Counter Points:

Is abortion more of a public health issue or a political one?

Public Health Issue: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/19/opinion/sunday/leana-wen-planned-parenthood.html>

Political Issue: <https://newrepublic.com/article/154507/dont-depoliticize-abortion>

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Current Events Topic #7: Diversity in Healthcare and Culturally Competent Care

Cultural competency is a critical component of patient care. A physician's awareness of the whole patient, including a patient's cultural background and how it impacts medical decision-making, assists the therapy a physician may provide. According to Daphne Koinis-Mitchell, associate professor at Brown University, lack of cultural competence among medical professionals can undermine the doctor-patient dynamic as a patient will be less likely to trust the doctor and be onboard with their treatment plan. The roles of stereotyping and generalizations are increasingly discussed in health care settings and taught in medical schools to raise cultural awareness and improve patient care. Furthermore, there has been an emphasis on increasing the diversity of individuals in healthcare in order to increase understanding and awareness of different backgrounds and how best to assist a patient in improving.

Medical schools and hospitals are also promoting diversity in the workplace. Female physicians are voicing discrimination they face in attaining healthcare leadership positions, and there is still prejudice towards female and minority doctors. Microaggression and biases are commonplace.

Being aware of these problems in healthcare is a great first step in helping to make the physician profession more equitable.

Good Article Reads:

This is a great read for an introduction to the consequences of cultural differences and misunderstandings in the healthcare space. The article delves into a few case studies to clearly establish the importance of cultural competence on the physician's part.

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1070887/>

This article explains that racial and ethnic minorities are more affected by health disparities than their white counterparts due to a variety of factors including literacy and language barriers. It emphasizes the importance of cultural competence for patient satisfaction.

- <https://hpi.georgetown.edu/cultural/>

Another quick and easy read that encompasses the information from the previous two articles.

- <https://hbr.org/2017/05/why-more-hospitals-should-prioritize-cultural-competency>

This article highlights some of the early historical trends and approaches to improving cultural competence in healthcare, the qualities which unite these avenues, and why they are important to improved patient care.

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- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2824588/>

Microaggressions in Medicine:

- <https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/diversity/microaggressions-everyday-life.pdf>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/health/microaggression-medicine-doctors.html>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7984763/>

Points and Counterpoints:

Difficulty in finding physicians of color: <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2022-06-05/therapy-mental-health-race-lgbtq>

Are we equipped to care for people with intellectual, developmental disabilities?

<https://www.medpagetoday.com/opinion/second-opinions/96768>

Addressing cultural bias in medicine: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/addressing-cultural-bias-in-medicine/>

Climbing the leadership ladder – a perspective from a female physician:

<https://permanente.org/climbing-the-leadership-ladder-what-female-physicians-need-to-know/>

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Current Events Topic #8: End-of-life Care

How do we take care of individuals who are nearing the end of their lives? End-of-life care is used to discuss how we take care of sick patients, who may have exhausted all their treatment options. One aspect of end-of-life care is palliative care. According to the WHO, palliative care is defined as care “that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.” Palliative care and a physician’s role in it is an often-debated topic in our society.

The ethics of palliative care are debated because it involves physician assisted suicide, which some people oppose because it opposes a fundamental dictum of the Hippocratic Oath — “do no harm” while others see it as prolonging a painful life as a violation of the same dictum. Many U.S. states have also taken vastly different stances, with eight states protecting “Death with Dignity” while others ban physician assisted suicide altogether.

Good Article Reads:

Broad overview of what end-of-life care entails

- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2532015>

This article will help you form an opinion. It is a thought-provoking feature of a new mother with metastatic lung cancer. The technicalities of her situation are disseminated through her personal story, making this an informative and compelling read. At times, surgeon-writer Atul Gawande asks the reader, “What would you do?” If you can answer that question, you’re ready for your interview.

- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/02/letting-go-2>

A Physician’s Guide to End-of-Life Care Discussions: Great tips on how to communicate with your patients and their families regarding end-of-life care!

- https://medicine.yale.edu/palliative/student/physicians%20guide_y3_37191_284_5636_v1.pdf

Points and Counter Points:

Other considerations when thinking about end-of-life care

Ethical Issues: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4934577/>

Benefits: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1200661/>

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Current Events Topic #9: Opioid Crisis

The opioid crisis, which entails the over-prescription and abuse of opioid-class pain medication, began in the 1990s and has been exacerbated by profit-minded pharmaceutical companies and physicians. Consequently, patients are becoming addicted to opioids and other substances pain-relieving substances like heroin and fentanyl. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, more than 130 people die daily due to opioid abuse in the United States.

Good Article Reads:

If a picture is worth a thousand words, you'll be a few thousand words richer for it. Scroll through this visual of the opioid epidemic by *Time Magazine*.

- <https://time.com/james-nachtwey-opioid-addiction-america/>

Read this article to find raw data and understand the extent of the crisis

- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/opioid-data-show-tsunami-of-pills-across-u-s-many-of-them-generics/>

Learn about new laws regarding opioid prescription and what they mean for patients

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/what-new-opioid-laws-mean-for-pain-relief>

Listen to this podcast about the history of opioids in America for your personal enrichment. Additional reads to understand why opioids became popular to combat pain, and the relationships between pharmaceutical companies, marketing, and physicians prescribing opioid medications.

- <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/02/709087394/americas-opioid-epidemic>

Points and Counter Points: Are opioids good or bad for patients?

Over-restriction to combat crisis is actually harming patients:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/29/opinion/opioid-crisis-chronic-pain.html>

Patient perspective about the highs and lows of opioids – and weaning off of them:

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-10-27/opioids-addiction-ehlers-danlos-syndrome-pain-treatment>

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Current Events Topic #10: Intersection of AI and healthcare

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a relatively new phenomenon in medicine and has transformed healthcare delivery and medical research. Although AI provides significant benefits from the rapid acquisition and processing of data to improve diagnoses and treatment, it simultaneously suffers from the lack of personal touch in a field that is founded upon human interaction and bedside manner. It is important to stay current with this rapidly evolving and innovative field.

Dr. Rachel Rizal wrote an article for U.S. News, [Artificial Intelligence and Healthcare – What Premeds Should Know](#)

Good Article Reads:

If you don't have a strong technological background or familiarity with the applications AI can have, this article provides a comprehensive overview of example companies that are transforming the delivery of healthcare and treatment of patients.

- <https://builtin.com/artificial-intelligence/artificial-intelligence-healthcare>

Great *Harvard Business Review* article that shows various applications of AI to healthcare.

- <https://hbr.org/2018/05/10-promising-ai-applications-in-health-care>

Would you trust an automated doctor? According to this article, people with high technological ability would. Click on the link above to learn more about the Penn State study that sought the public's opinion on AI in healthcare.

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adigaskell/2019/06/19/would-you-trust-an-automated-doctor/#5a5e5c974a3b>

Points and Counter Points:

How can artificial intelligence change healthcare – for better or for worse?

AI could worsen healthcare disparities: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/opinion/ai-bias-healthcare.html>

AI could democratize healthcare: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/316430>

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Keep in touch with the Cracking Med School Admissions Team!

We hope that this current events guide is a good primer for your medical school and residency interviews! Even if you're not currently preparing for your medical school interview, it's good to stay on top of current events in healthcare.

Cheers,

The Cracking Med School Admissions team

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