



PiAf Fellowship & Medical School Application Process

Each year we have a number of Princeton in Africa applicants who are interested in applying to medical school during their fellowship year, but are unsure of how to navigate the application process while abroad. This guide offers some tips and suggestions from former Fellows who were able to make the most of their fellowship year while successfully applying to medical school.

Apply Early! Apply Early! Apply Early!

The most important piece of advice from our former Fellows is to submit your application as early as possible. All medical school applicants are advised to apply early, but this is especially important for individuals who will be living and working abroad during the application process. The application becomes available online in May, with the first day of submission in early June. By submitting your primary and secondary applications early, medical schools will be able to notify you earlier and will have more time to help you work around your limited travel schedule. This was our #1 piece of advice from former PiAf Fellows who applied to medical school during their fellowship year: **work on your primary in May so that you can submit within two weeks of the day the application opens, before you depart for your post.**

Pre-Write Secondaries

After you submit your primary application and it's verified by the application service, you will receive secondary applications. Completing secondaries can be a time-intensive process. Your application file will not be considered complete at a school until your secondary (along with a verified application, MCAT scores, & letters of recommendation) is submitted, and you will not be invited for an interview until your file is complete. For this reason, former Fellows recommend pre-writing secondaries after you have submitted your primary application while you wait for secondary essays from your schools. To preview secondary questions from past application cycles you can check out the "School-Specific Discussions" forum at <http://www.studentdoctor.net>. Please note that you should approach the SDN Forums with *caution*. There is little quality control, verification, or moderation of what is being said, however, there are gems of valuable information in regard to secondary prompts and interview reports.

Let Schools Know You are Applying from Abroad

As soon as possible, let schools know that you will be out of the country during the interview season. You can do this on your primary and your secondary applications. Let your schools know when you intend to return home for interviews (former Fellows recommend that you return home for at least two weeks) and ask if they would be able to work within that schedule if you are fortunate enough to receive an interview invitation.

Strategically Schedule Visit Back to U.S.

Former Fellows recommend that you block at least two weeks to return home for interviews. Most schools allow applicants to choose their interview dates. If the options do not match the dates you will be home, give the admissions office a call and explain that you are completing a fellowship abroad. Most schools will view your experience as a valid reason to be a little more flexible with your interview date. If you can only come back once, former Fellows recommend that you come back in December/January, but know that many schools do not interview from a few days before Christmas until after the new year.

Coordinating Medical School Interviews with your Supervisor/Partner Organization

You will need to speak to your supervisor/partner organization about your medical school interview travel plans early in your fellowship. This will ensure you have the support to take time off. Before you book your tickets back to the U.S. for your interviews it is important that you are proactive and create a work plan for the time you plan to be away from work.

Things to consider when deciding whether to apply to medical school during a PiAf fellowship:

- If you receive an offer from PiAf consider the timing of your fellowship start/end date-- The PiAf fellowship is a **1-year commitment**. If you are thinking about going to medical school right after your fellowship you will need to consider when you depart for your post and when medical school programs

begin the following summer. You need to consider these factors when you decide whether applying to medical school during your fellowship year is a feasible option for you.

- Consider internet access at your post. Specifics about each post change from year to year; however, if you are based in an urban area you should have fairly reliable access to internet. You can read through current and former Fellows' reports to get a better sense of internet access at a specific post. Email piafapp@princetonin africa.org to request access to Fellows' reports.
- Keep in mind that you may need to give up some fantastic travel opportunities within Africa because you need to go home for medical school interviews and have limited vacation time.

Is it worth it? : Thoughts from Former Fellows on Applying to Medical School while Abroad

"I did not have much clinical experience prior to applying to medical school and I knew the PiAf fellowship would help me stand out as an applicant. I also knew that I was not ready to begin medical school immediately following undergrad. For me, the fellowship really amplified my interest in global health, pediatrics and infectious disease. Frankly, after working at Botswana-Baylor COE, I find that I am light years ahead of the average resident even, when it comes to pediatric HIV." **Mgebechi Erundu, PiAf Fellow 2010-11 (BIPAI, BOTSWANA)**

"I would definitely say that the fellowship is a rare chance to really get your hands dirty in health development as well as more grassroots health outreach in a global setting. I think a lot of what I picked up (unknowingly!) about teamwork/management skills and multitasking/time management is actually extremely useful now as a third year rotating in wards. Looking back, I'm glad I did it, and I'd do it again." **Christina Jung, PiAf Fellow 2010-11 (BIPAI, LESOTHO)**

"It is a lot of work applying while abroad, but is SO incredibly worth it! Honestly, applying to medical school is hard wherever you are. I see my future career involved with Africa and it didn't make sense to wait another four to seven years before I could actually spend a year somewhere on the continent. The fellowship has confirmed many of my previous beliefs and goals. I think the greatest impact is that it has provided me with living, breathing examples of what I want to pursue." **Annette Dekker, PiAf Fellow 2012-13 (BIPAI, BOTSWANA)**

Final Notes

Every year we have PiAf Fellows who successfully apply to medical school while making the most of their fellowship year. As long as you remain organized and clearly communicate with your schools, you too should be able to navigate the medical school application process during your fellowship year!

For more specific information on the medical school application process, we recommend that you reach out to your health professions advising office directly.

Special thanks go to our former Fellows and Princeton's Health Professions Advising office for their assistance in putting together this information sheet.