Must Ask Questions (MAQs) During Pathology Residency Interview Season

By Meredith Herman, DO (social media: https://linktr.ee/meredithkherman) and Casey Schukow, DO (social media: https://linktr.ee/caseypschukow)

We've put this list together for future pathology residency applicants to help students thoroughly evaluate residency programs. When they ask *"What questions do you have for me?"* you will be ready to go!

Resident-specific questions:

1. Why this program?
2. Would you choose this program again?
3. What is your favorite thing about working here?
4. What is the onboarding process like?
5. Is there a bootcamp?
6. How would you describe the learning environment?
7. Housing near the hospital and affordability?
8. What does the resident room look like (e.g., offices, cubbies)?
9. What has been the most challenging aspect of residency?
10. What would you change about the program?
11. Do residents hang out outside of work? If so, what was the last thing you all did?
12. Describe the work culture and learning environment
13. Describe a time when you were supported by the program
14. Describe a time when you expressed a concern and how the program responded
15. In one word, how would you describe the PD?
16. What has been your favorite rotation and why?
17. What has been your least favorite rotation and why?
18. What are the teaching and research opportunities?
19. How are residents introduced to call?
20. How often do you work with medical students?
21. Do you feel well supported at home as a resident here (i.e., childcare, maternal/paternal leave, adequate PTO, etc.)?
22. Barriers to using social media as part of the program (e.g., PathTwitter)?
23. What is the call schedule like for:
    a. Frozen sections?
    b. Blood bank?
    c. Autopsy?
    d. Is AP call combined with CP call?
    e. Do PGY1's take call?
24. Is there flexibility in years 1-2 to do rotations in subspecialties of interest?
25. Optional research electives?
26. Rotation specific questions
    a. Surgical pathology rotations:
        i. What is the grossing schedule (e.g., 1-day vs. 3-day cycle)?
        ii. Do you get adequate preview time?

          iii.   Do you preview/sign-out the cases you gross?
          iv.   How many PAs: residents?
          v.   How many educational cases do you gross per grossing day

27. Electives
    a. Are residents allowed to do away electives or are they in-house?
    b. How many months of electives do residents get?
    c. When do elective months occur?
28. Perks
    a. What perks does the program give residents?
        i. 401K, meal vouchers, bonuses, etc.
    b. Does the program give you money for food, parking, research, conferences, exams, etc.?

AP/CP Faculty-specific questions:
1. What led you to work at this institution?
2. What made you decide to stay at this program (prior residency, fellowship, connections, etc.)?
3. Is there anything you would change about the program?
4. Are there staffing shortages? If so, how has this impacted the workflow?
5. What does mentorship look like in this program?
6. Have you been involved with research projects with past/current residents?
7. How do faculty provide feedback to residents?
8. How is digital pathology integrated into the workflow?
9. Do you feel well supported at home as an employee here (i.e., childcare, family insurances, adequate PTO time, etc.)?
10. Are you or any other faculty involved on social media (e.g., PathTwitter)?

Program Director (PD)-specific questions:
1. Are there any current changes that you are implementing in the program?
2. If you had all the time and money in the world to invest into the program, what would it be?
3. If a resident is struggling in residency, how do you help them?
4. How are residents evaluated? How do you ensure they meet milestones?
5. How is the boards-passing rate among previous residents?
6. Fellowship opportunities for residents (i.e., what types and locations)?
7. What is the favorite thing you enjoy about your job?
8. Do you encourage social media use (e.g., PathTwitter) among residents/faculty?
9. Is digital pathology and informatics implemented? If not, are there plans for implementation?

Other general program questions:
1. Where do residents typically live?
2. Is parking nearby and is it covered by the program?
3. What are the different locations where residents work?

4. Is travel to other sites required? If so, is lodging covered by the program?

Questions to help overall evaluate programs:
1. Is the website and information up-to-date?
2. Does the program have any social media handles or pages?
3. What is your impression of the program?
4. Pre-interview Communication:
    a. Respectful and prompt responsive to emails?
    b. Scheduling feasibility/issues?
    c. Resident Q&A sessions?
    d. Open houses?
5. Interview Day:
    a. Organization?
    b. Orientation session?
    c. Did you have time with the PD and/or Associate PD one-to-one?
    d. Did any non-pathology department faculty interview you (e.g., family medicine physician)?
    e. Did any non-pathologist department faculty interview you (e.g., pathologist assistants, cytotechnicians, etc.)?
    f. Did any residents interview you?
    g. Were interviewers open to communicating after interview
6. Faculty Interviews:
    a. Did they review your application thoroughly?
    b. Did they ask you thoughtful questions about your application (e.g., demonstrate interests in your "Hobbies" section, ask about your past/current research)?
    c. Did you meet a faculty from AP and CP?
    d. Did they leave time for you to ask questions?
7. Residency Program:
    a. Leadership of PD?
    b. Case volume for autopsy, surgical, and cytologic specimens?
    c. Stability of program (e.g., transitions in leadership, hospital affiliations, etc.)?
    d. Quality of residents and resident morale?
    e. Collegiality among residents and faculty?
    f. Does everyone like working/hanging out with each other?
    g. Overall good or bad vibes?
8. Education:
    a. Didactic program?
    b. Training model (e.g., general vs. sub-specialty surgical sign-out, etc.)?
    c. Training site location(s)?
    d. Research opportunities for projects and abstracts?
    e. Fellowship opportunities?
    f. Technology (e.g., informatics, molecular, etc.?)
    g. Teaching opportunities (e.g., rotating medical salaries, etc.)?
9. Employment:

       a. Salary?
       b. Benefits?
       c. Perks (e.g., travel, research support, computers, etc.)?
       d. Workload/education balance?

10. Location:
       a. Livability?
       b. Commute?
       c. Affordability?
       d. Safety?
       e. Childcare?
       f. Schooling?