Question: What is the minimum number of courses beyond the core courses that I need to compete for selection for medical school?

Answer:
- PH206 (or 256) Physics II
- CH102 (or 152) Chemistry II
- CH383 Organic Chemistry I
- CH384 Organic Chemistry II
- CH275 or CH375 (Biology)
- CH387 Human Physiology
- CH473 Biochemistry

In the Life Science Major you also get CH385 Cell Biology, CH388 Genetics, CH457 Microbiology, and CH479 Biotechnology. These courses will help prepare you for the Biological Sciences portion of the MCAT and medical school. Additional courses in Chemistry will help prepare you for the chemistry questions in the Physical Sciences portion of the MCAT. Medical school selection is a very competitive process. You must compete with your classmates for endorsement and compete with students at other universities for admittance to medical school.

Question: What is the USMA medical school selection process?

Answer: The USMA Medical Program Advisory Committee meets in April and interviews second class cadets interested in attending medical school. Provisional selections are announced in April and final selections are made in August, after all cadets complete the MCAT. The board is chaired by the Commander of Keller Army Community Hospital (or his/her representative) and includes members from the West Point medical staff, the Dean’s Office, the Chemistry and Life Science Department, USU, and USCC. Cadets must have a 3.2 academic GPA or higher and an MCAT score of 500 or higher (with 124 or higher in each section) to be endorsed by the board. Cadets may be selected to attend immediately after graduation, chosen as an alternate for later consideration, or not selected.

Question: What are the most important factors determining selection by the board?

Answer: Your academic GPA, BCPM (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math) GPA, MCAT, and interview are the most important factors. Medical schools place a high premium on research, clinical exposure (shadowing), volunteer work and community service. These are also carefully considered by the board. Other important factors include your military and physical performance as well as recommendations from the staff and faculty. Members of the MPAC re-evaluate applicants after MCAT scores are received during the summer. The committee seeks to choose the cadets most qualified to attend medical school immediately upon graduation from the Academy.

Question: I want to go to medical school but I am also interested in doing some troop leading time in the Army. Can I go to medical school later?

Answer: Absolutely! There are many advantages to going on active duty for a few years before attending medical school. In fact, of all the USMA graduates that are Army physicians, half went to medical school immediately after graduation and half went after serving some active duty time. Whichever option you choose, it is im-

United States Military Academy

For more information:
LTC(P) Jason Barnhill, PhD Alan Beitler, MD
Director of Life Science Office of the Dean

Dept. of Chemistry and Life Science
MADN-CLS
West Point, NY 10996
845-938-3915
Medical School Option

Up to 2% of each USMA class may proceed directly to medical school immediately following graduation. Those desiring to enter this program must be endorsed by a West Point selection committee and earn acceptance to medical school. The Chemistry and Life Science Department provides courses required for participation in the program, including general chemistry, organic chemistry, biology, human physiology, and biochemistry. Cadets interested in attending medical school may select any major. The majority enroll in Life Science.

Since the medical school program was introduced for the Class of 1979, ten to twenty members of each class have proceeded directly to various medical schools. A number of graduates have attended the Department of Defense Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USU). While enrolled in USU, they draw normal pay and allowances as a second lieutenant. Tuition, equipment, and book costs are paid by the U.S. Government. Those attending civilian schools receive financial support through the Army Health professions Scholarship Program (HPSP). Students serve in a reserve status while in school. The scholarship pays tuition, books, fees, and a monthly stipend.

Cadets who do not attend medical school immediately after graduation may apply for an HPSP scholarship and/or to USU while on active duty. The number of USMA graduates who attend medical school following some active Army service often exceeds the numbers who go directly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How many cadets are allowed to go to medical school immediately after graduation?
Answer: Up to 2% of each class (approximately 20 cadets) are allowed to attend medical school immediately after graduation.

Question: When would I take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)?
Answer: If you want to go to medical school immediately after graduation, you are strongly encouraged to take the exam in the spring of your second class (Cow) year. All cadets must take the MCAT by mid-June of that year.

Question: What is the best major to take if I want to go to medical school? I have read that medical schools are looking for students from diverse academic backgrounds.
Answer: One of the problems with reading general advice about medical school is that the academic program at USMA is unique. If college students at another university want to go to medical school they often choose a “pre-med” curriculum in which they take organic chemistry and as much life science as possible, but take very little math, other science, or humanities courses. Medical schools want well-rounded students who have taken a variety of courses in math, science, and humanities, as well as courses needed for medical school. Your Core Academic Program, which comprises 67% of your academic experience at USMA, is a broad-based academic program with courses in math, science, and humanities. This is exactly the kind of broad-based academic program medical schools are looking for. The remaining 33% of your academic experience at USMA (courses in your major, complementary support courses and electives) must include the remaining classes you need to prepare for the MCAT and medical school. The vast majority of cadets interested in medical school sign up for the Life Science Major which offers several courses that prepare you for the MCAT and medical school. The minimum course requirements for most medical schools are 2 semesters of organic chemistry with lab, 2 semesters of biology, and biochemistry. Cadets who can fit these courses into their 8-term academic program can major in other disciplines.

Question: When do I have to decide if I want to pursue the medical school option?
Answer: At the latest, the decision should be made before the end of your Yearling year; however, most cadets decide when declaring their major. However, if you know you are interested now, you should make that known to Academic Counselors in the Chemistry and Life Science Department and the Office of the Dean.

Question: What additional obligation do I incur for attending medical school?
Answer: You incur an additional 4 year obligation if you attend a civilian medical school on the HPSP or an additional 7 years if you go to USU. You will “pay off” your West Point and medical school obligations consecutively after completing your residency program.

Photo courtesy of Majs Brad West, U.S. Army