

1 **Title:** Applying to US Medical Schools as a Couple: Our Experience

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3 JK. Supervision: LVB, LP, SL, JK. Visualization: MDB, QN, JK. Writing - Original Draft: MDB, QN. Writing -  
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1 **ABSTRACT.**

2 Applying to medical school is a lengthy and competitive process and doing so as a couple presents unique  
3 challenges. This article offers the personal experience of two students who applied and successfully  
4 matriculated to US medical schools during the same admissions cycle. By sharing our perspectives and advice  
5 from admissions professionals, we hope to help prospective medical students navigate this unique  
6 circumstance.

7

8 **Key Words:** Schools, Medical; Students, Premedical; Interpersonal Relations, Professionalism (Source: MeSH-  
9 NLM).

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## 1 THE EXPERIENCE.

2 By the time we were ready to apply to medical school, we were four years into our relationship. We were both  
3 excited to pursue our dream of becoming physicians but felt uncertain about how the process might affect our  
4 support system. Despite the significant challenges students face during medical school and the importance of  
5 social support in higher education,<sup>1,2</sup> there are no clear guidelines for couples applying to medical school  
6 together. As two successful applicants (M.D.B. and Q.N.), we share our experience, strategies, and advice for  
7 others navigating this process as a pair.

8

9 Before applying as a couple, it is important to understand the basic medical school application process,  
10 timeline, and required materials.<sup>3-5</sup> Consult your university's pre-med advisors and mentors who know you  
11 well for help creating your application. Think about which programs align with your goals and strengths,  
12 prioritizing home-state schools and programs where either partner has strong ties (family, school enrollment,  
13 prior residence, etc.).

14

15 After finalizing our individual school lists, we discussed where to apply as a couple. While our goal was to  
16 attend the same program, we considered the possibility of attending different schools. We decided not to  
17 consider programs more than 3 hours apart by car, train, or direct flight, and found it helpful to organize  
18 schools into five tiers (Figure 2).

19

### 20 *Turning Point 1: Submitting our Applications*

21 After months of hard work drafting our applications, we faced a new challenge: waiting patiently for programs  
22 to respond. Applying alongside your partner is unique because you are intimately aware of each other's  
23 progress throughout the admissions cycle. Interview invites can be twice as exciting, while rejections can sting  
24 twice as much, especially when one partner receives more interest than the other.

25

26 If one partner receives an interview or acceptance, the other should consider sending update letters to nearby  
27 schools. When Q.N. was accepted to a Florida program, M.D.B. sent updates to multiple programs nearby.  
28 Reiterating interest seemed to pay off, as M.D.B. received an interview invite from one of the schools weeks  
29 later. It is generally acceptable to send updates to multiple programs if they welcome communication, but  
30 avoid sending letters of intent – in which a commitment is made to attend upon acceptance – to multiple  
31 schools.

32

### 33 *Turning Point 2: Making a Decision*

34 By the time interviews concluded in April, there was no overlap in our acceptances or waitlists. Realizing we  
35 could not attend the same program, or even live together during medical school, was one of the hardest  
36 moments of the cycle. We also needed to decide whether we wanted to risk waiting for Q.N. to be offered a  
37 position from the waitlist at an Arizona school – our home state – or commit to moving to Florida. After  
38 considering our options, we decided to commit to our Florida schools. We appreciated their confidence in us  
39 and wanted to ensure we could attend medical school in the same state.

40

1 Throughout this process, maintaining open and honest communication with your partner is key. It is important  
2 to establish your individual goals and priorities early and communicate frequently. Here are some hard  
3 questions we each asked ourselves:

- 4
- 5 1. Is getting accepted into medical school more important than staying close to my partner?
- 6 2. Am I willing to decline an acceptance at one of my top-choice programs for my relationship?
- 7 3. How confident am I that my partner will be in my life for the next 5 years? 10 years?
- 8 4. How far apart from my partner am I willing to be?
- 9 5. Would I enjoy attending the same program as my partner? Or would I prefer to have my own  
10 experience?

11

12 The answers to these questions will vary significantly between relationships because each one is unique. Be  
13 cautious with allowing your goals as a couple to dictate your goals as individuals. No matter how confident  
14 you are in the longevity of your relationship, it is crucial to consider your happiness at a program if your  
15 relationship does not work out.

16

17 Unfortunately, some applicants may not be accepted during their first cycle. If you are considering reapplying,  
18 take time to reflect on your application and identify areas for improvement. If one partner is accepted and the  
19 other is not, reapplying to that program or nearby schools in the next cycle remains a strong option. Having a  
20 significant other at the school can strengthen your application by demonstrating genuine interest and offering  
21 valuable insight into what medical school is really like.

### 22

### 23 *Turning Point 3: Adjusting to Medical School & Key Takeaways*

24 While we may not have known it when applying, attending different schools was best for us. We have gotten  
25 the opportunity to meet twice as many people and grow as individuals. During the week, we have plenty of  
26 time to focus on our school work, and we make the 2-hour drive nearly every weekend to visit each other. We  
27 are currently completing our third-year clerkships, recently got engaged, and are beginning to think about  
28 applying to residency in the 2027 NRMP couples match.

29

30 Our key takeaways from this process, and advice from three admissions professionals at one of our medical  
31 schools, are shown in Table 1. While the advice we received from admissions professionals largely aligned  
32 with our experiences, it also highlighted potential challenges such as how relationship changes might affect  
33 class dynamics.

1 **CONCLUSIONS.**

2 Our experience highlights the importance of setting realistic expectations, considering logistics such as distance  
3 and travel, and remaining resilient when applying to medical school as a couple. Honest, consistent  
4 communication helped us make informed decisions and support each other. Though stressful, the process was  
5 worth it. We hope our insights offer practical guidance and reassurance. You are not alone, and we are rooting  
6 for you!

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1 **SUMMARY - ACCELERATING TRANSLATION**

2 Applying to medical school is stressful, and applying as a couple adds additional challenges. This article, entitled  
3 "Applying to US Medical Schools as a Couple: Our Experience," highlights the experience of two applicants who  
4 applied to U.S. medical schools as a committed couple and successfully matriculated during the same  
5 admissions cycle. Using a personal, experience-based approach, the authors describe how they built their  
6 school lists, communicated with admissions offices, managed interviews and acceptances, and made final  
7 enrollment decisions with the goal of aiding future co-applicants. In addition, key points of advice from medical  
8 school admissions professionals are shared. This article shows that although applying to medical school as a  
9 couple is challenging, honest communication, realistic expectations, and adaptability can help couples navigate  
10 this process successfully.

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1 **FIGURES AND TABLES.**

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3 **Figure 1. Meet the Authors**



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1 **Figure 2.** Our Five-Tier System for Prospective Medical Schools

Tier 1: Program is a good fit for both applicants

Tier 2: Program is a good fit for applicant A, with a good fit for applicant B in the same city or <1 hour apart

Tier 3: Program is a good fit for applicant A, with a good fit for applicant B within 1-3 hours by car or train

Tier 4: Program is a good fit for applicant A, with a good fit for applicant B within 1-3 hours by direct flight

Tier 5: Program is a good fit for applicant A, but there are no good fits for applicant B within 3 hours by car, train, or direct flight

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**Table 1: Key Takeaways for Couples Dual-Aplying to Medical School**

Medical Student Advice	Admissions Professional Advice
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek advice from trusted mentors</li> <li>2. Evaluate programs of interest individually before discussing as a couple</li> <li>3. Maximize your ties when building your school list</li> <li>4. Discuss the possibility of attending different programs, and define reasonable distance</li> <li>5. Update schools where your partner was accepted, plus any others nearby</li> <li>6. Avoid the cycle of comparison</li> <li>7. Rejection is normal – but it still stings</li> <li>8. Be open and honest with your partner, you have each other to lean on</li> <li>9. The process is difficult, but worth it!</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remain professional in all communications</li> <li>2. Visit schools of interest together to inform your decisions</li> <li>3. Be objective: the goal of the admissions team is to admit students based on merit</li> <li>4. Understand that relationships change over time &amp; breakups could affect class dynamics</li> <li>5. Consider communicating your relationship to programs so they can document your interest in attending together</li> <li>6. Utilize letters of interest and intent judiciously</li> <li>7. Avoid compromising professional goals or interests for your partner</li> </ol>

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