**THE ROAD TO MEDICAL SCHOOL**

Becoming a practicing physician normally requires 11 to 14 years after graduation from high school. Four years are required for the completion of an undergraduate degree, and an additional four years are spent in medical school. Residency programs vary from 3-6 years, depending on the medical specialty. So what should you do during your undergraduate years to prepare for medical school?

The UAMS College of Medicine has the following pre-matriculation requirements: **Biology (2 semesters), Genetics (1 semester), Chemistry (3 semesters, to include Organic Chemistry with lab, and Biochemistry), Physics (2 semesters), Statistics (1 semester), English (2 semesters), and Social Sciences (2 semesters)**. Requirements at other medical schools may vary slightly, but these courses are generally considered to be a minimum basis for success in medical school. Most successful applicants major in Biology or Chemistry, but you may major in whatever you choose as long as you complete the courses listed above. Medical schools desire students with varied interests, so you should enroll in a variety of liberal arts courses and participate in extracurricular activities as well. A record of leadership and volunteerism is also important and is viewed favorably by medical school admission committees.

Acceptance into medical school is based primarily on four criteria:

**1)** **UNDERGRADUATE RECORD**--The minimum acceptable GPA generally is around 3.40. The higher the better, especially in science, but by no means is a 4.0 required. However, it is important to get off to a good start in college coursework; more A's than B's with only an occasional C will be required for success.

**2) MCAT**--The Medical College Admissions Test is more a test of skills than memory. Above average scores in each of the areas of the exam are generally required for admission to medical school. The MCAT is normally taken during the spring or summer preceding the fall during which you plan to apply. If the exam is taken more than once, UAMS averages the scores. To prepare, you should take coursework that provides you the opportunity for analytical and synthetic thinking and problem solving. Commercial prep courses for the MCAT are available.

**3) MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW**--This is important! You should relax and be yourself. Mandatory practice interviews are conducted by the UCA Premedical Advisory Committee.

**4) RECOMMENDATION**--The UCA Premedical Advisory Committee provides a recommendation based on your college record, your committee interview, and a summary of evaluations provided by faculty and others who know you best.

Of those who fail to gain admission into medical school, most fail during their ­first year of undergraduate work. Becoming a physician requires a strong commitment to learning and to personal development, and many students are discouraged when confronted with the magnitude of that commitment. Fortunately, the courses in the pre-medical core are appropriate for a number of other career options.