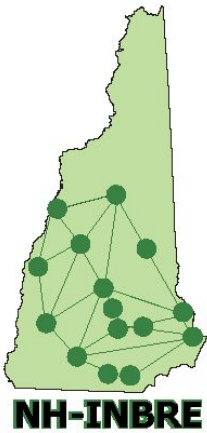# Medical School Mentoring

Session 3: The Primary Application

Presented by: The NH-INBRE Alumni Network
March 28th, 2023

About Us - NH INBRE Alumni Network & Mentoring Programs

New Hampshire INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) is a program funded by the National Institutes of Health to develop a coordinated network of biomedical research and research training in New Hampshire.

In 2021, the NH INBRE Director of Biomedical Workforce Development implemented a one-on-one mentoring program for INBRE students to be paired with INBRE alumni.

Alumni mentoring provides career and academic guidance to current students on a volunteer basis.

In 2022, following the INBRE annual conference, two INBRE alumni recognized an urgent need to provide mentorship support for the numerous pre-med majors at the partner schools.

In 2023, the Medical School Mentoring program was launched for all pre-med students at the partner schools.

Medical School Mentors are current medical students that are either INBRE alumni or volunteers from the lead partner schools.

Lead Partners:
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
University of New Hampshire at Durham

Partner Institutions:
Colby-Sawyer College
Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH)
Franklin Pierce University
Keene State College
New England College
Plymouth State University
Saint Anselm College
University of New Hampshire at Manchester

Associated Members:
Rivier University

NH-INBRE

Program Directors

Haley Zanga
MS1 Loyola University of Chicago
Stritch School of Medicine '26
Keene State College '18

Somer Matar
PhD Candidate in Molecular Biology
Dartmouth College
Keene State College '15

Medical School Mentoring Program: Goals

- Provide resources, information, and support to students who are on their journey to become physicians.
- To **supplement** the pre-med advising at the NH INBRE partner schools.
- Establish more networking relationships within the INBRE community and beyond.

Mentor Introductions

Haley Zanga
MS1 Loyola University of Chicago
Stritch School of Medicine '26
Keene State College '18

Catrina Hood
Soon-to-be Pediatric Resident!
MS4 UVM Larner College of Medicine '23
Colby-Sawyer College '17

What is the Primary Application?

- The "Common Application"...but for medical school
- There are multiple Application Services, depending on which medical school(s) you are applying to
    - American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) for MD programs
    - Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDAS)
    - American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOMAS)
    - International Programs, including Caribbean programs, may use their own individual application or allow you to send a copy of your AMCAS or AACOMAS application
- Application cycle year is based on the calendar year you would matriculate to (or start) medical school
    - Ex. this May, AMCAS will release the 2024 AMCAS
- You can apply to all application services if you wish (but remember each has different requirements and cost money)
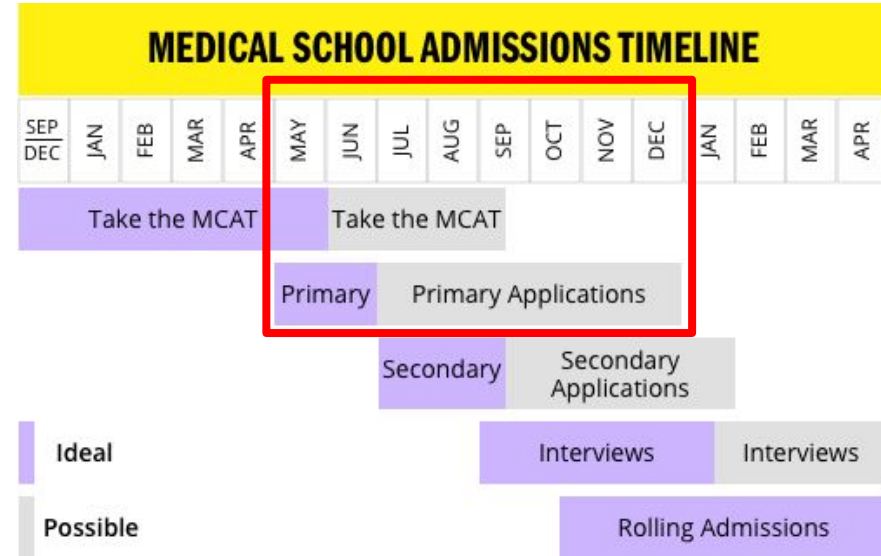
How much does it cost?

- 2023 AMCAS
  - **$170** processing fee (includes 1 school designation) + **$43** <u>per additional school</u>
  - Ex. Applying to 12 schools via AMCAS: $170 + ($43 x 11) = $643
  - **Fee Assistance Program**
    - Application-based financial aid program through AAMC
    - Includes MCAT fee waivers, free access to AAMC MCAT prep materials
    - Waiver for all AMCAS fees for 1 application submission with up to 20 school designations ($987 value for 2023 AMCAS)
    - If you think you might be eligible or are interested in pursuing, do so BEFORE spending $$ on AAMC materials/fees

- 2023 AACOMAS
  - **$198** processing fee (includes 1 school designation) + **$50** <u>per additional school</u>
  - Fee Waiver program also available

Timeline of Completing the Primary Application

- Application Opens **early May***
- Available for Submission **early June***
- After submission, personal statement and other written narrative sections submitted by applicant become LOCKED
- Application Verification: after submission, it takes an undisclosed amount of time (days to weeks) for the servicer to "process" & verify the application
  - Transcripts are required for verification to begin
  - **Must** be marked as complete/verified BEFORE it is released to any medical schools
- Application sent to schools when it is verified
- **The earlier you submit your application, the earlier it is verified=the earlier it is looked at by medical schools=greater chance of getting an interview seat**

https://www.kaptest.com/study/mcat/the-3-phases-of-applying-to-medical-school/

Application Sections: Overview

Background Information

- **Identifying Information**
  - Legal Name, Preferred Name, Alternate Name(s)
  - ID numbers (school, NOT SSN)
  - Birth and Gender Identity Information
  - Schools Attended (starting with high school)
  - Degrees
  - Transcripts
    - Must send "official transcript" from each college where coursework was taken
- **Biographic Information**
  - Address(es)
  - Citizenship and Legal Residence
  - Self-Identification
  - Parents/Guardians, Siblings, Dependents
- **Schools attended**

Tips and Tricks- Sending in your transcripts

- Request your transcripts early: delays in doing so will delay you from being able to submit your application to be verified
- Official transcripts from all colleges where you have taken or attempted college coursework must be received by AMCAS to be verified! Your GPA will only be calculated by AMCAS once your application is verified.
- Get official transcripts to have at your side when you enter your coursework. It must be listed chronologically and EXACTLY as it appears on the transcript. This allows your verifier to match up your transcript with what you have entered on the application.
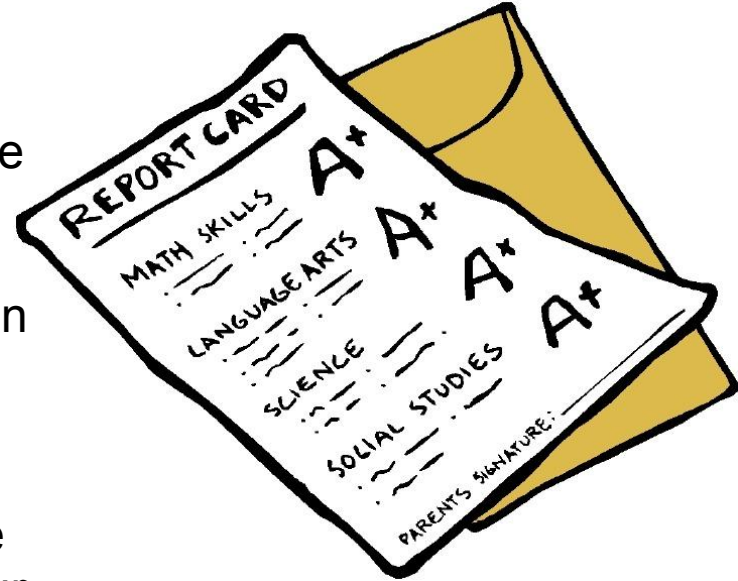
Coursework

- You must enter each college-credit course, including AP courses, as they appear on your transcript(s)
- Use an official copy of your transcript, if possible, as reference for completing this section
- Application services use various GPA calculations so your GPA may not match your transcript GPA
- Option to list current or future coursework (non-binding & not included in GPA calculations)
  - Especially important to list if it is a prerequisite course that has not been completed yet
- Follow the AMCAS course classification guide when adding in courses (linked to the right)

Add Course   ×

ⓘ Please be sure to enter all course(s) in the correct academic year, academic term, and year in school to avoid delays in application processing time.

Reminder: The AMCAS year begins with summer and ends with spring. Courses taken in the summer should be entered with the next academic year, even if your institution considers them in the previous academic year. For example, if you took a course in the first summer session of 2016, you should enter it as the 2016–2017 academic year, even if your school considers it in the 2015–2016 academic year.

Academic Year *
Select Year ▼

Academic Term *
Select Academic Term ▼

Year in School *
Select Year in School ▼

Add Course   ×

Course Number   Course Name *
Please enter any letters or numbers. Example BIO 101
Please enter course number   Please enter course name

Course Classification *
Please review additional information about Course Classification in the AMCAS Applicant Guide.

Select Course Classification ▼

ⓘ Although an asterisk does not appear next to Transcript Grade and Credit Hours indicating these fields are required, you must complete these fields if the information appears on your official transcript.

In certain cases, it may be appropriate to leave these fields blank. Please review the coursework section of the AMCAS Applicant Guide for more information. Failure to include required grades and credit hours may result in application processing delays, missed deadlines, and lost application fees. Please contact the AAMC Services Contact Center if you have any questions: (202) 828-0600, amcas@aamc.org.

https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school-amcas/amcas-course-classification-guide

Work & Activities

- Up to **15** experiences can be entered
- Experience Type
- Dates: Completed vs Anticipated (new in '23 cycle)
- Total Completed Hours: Completed vs Anticipated (new in '23 cycle)
- Experience Description: Summarize experience (**max 700 characters** including spaces)
  - Description of WHAT you did
  - Using a bulleted list of resume/CV as a starting point can be helpful
  - Don't need to include every single lab technique or skill
- It is not required to list 15 experiences but it can be beneficial to you (make sure they are meaningful and impactful experiences)

- Artistic Endeavors
- Community Service/Volunteer – Medical/Clinical
- Community Service/Volunteer – Not Medical/Clinical
- Conferences Attended
- Extracurricular Activities
- Hobbies
- Honors/Awards/Recognitions
- Intercollegiate Athletics
- Leadership – Not Listed Elsewhere
- Military Service
- Other
- Paid Employment – Medical/Clinical
- Paid Employment – Not Medical/Clinical
- Physician Shadowing/Clinical Observation
- Presentations/Posters
- Publications
- Research/Lab
- Teaching/Tutoring/Teaching Assistant

Examples

Food Bank Volunteer/Food Distribution Volunteer: Community Service/Volunteer - not medical/clinical   12/2016 - 01/2017, 15 hours   06/2018-11/2018, 35 hours

"I sorted and packed grocery store donations for distribution to smaller food shelves across Vermont and packed boxes for distribution to low-income elderly community members (Contact Name 1, Title 1, Phone # 1, 15 hours).

I will participate in the Summer Health Care Share program sponsored by the UVM Medical Center during summer 2018 (Contact Name 2, Title 2, Phone # 2, 35 hours). This program provides free farm shares to families facing food insecurity. Responsibilities include setting up share items for distribution and providing nutritional education to recipients to promote effective utilization of the produce."

- Grouping closely related experiences together can help emphasize a common theme (ex. Hunger Alleviation)...listing 15 hours of service and 35 hours of service felt less impactful than grouping together for 50 total hours of service

Examples

Organic Chemistry Supplemental Instructor: Teaching/Tutoring/Teaching Assistant, 09/2015 - 05/2016, 100 hours

"I led weekly group study sessions for students enrolled in Organic Chemistry I/II which emphasized group thinking and problem solving. I facilitated group discussions of the course material and prompted students to guide me through solving practice problems. I worked closely with the professor to inform him of any content areas the students needed further practice with. I developed practice problems for use during group study sessions in conjunction with lecture material and reputable online resources."

- Describe what you did, thinking carefully about word choice just as you would for a resume (I made versus I developed/created"
- The Great Debate: Bullet Lists versus Paragraph Format → AMCAS I used paragraphs but for Residency Applications this past season, I used bullet list format…so no "right" choice in my opinion!

Examples

Health Professions Association Club: Extracurricular Activities, 09/2013-05/2017, 150 hours

"I attended weekly meetings to obtain information from pre-med advisors, listen to guest speakers, and plan club-sponsored events (100 hours). I participated in numerous community service events sponsored by the club (50 hours) such as: annual bone marrow donor registration drive, volunteering at a local assisted living facility, and sponsoring an annual collection drive for a local homeless shelter. I also volunteered at two admissions events to promote the club to prospective students and their families. I was elected as the pre-med representative for the club from April 2015-May 2017. In this leadership role, I served as a direct contact for students considering pursuing a medical education."

- Made distinction between club meeting hours versus community service hours to avoid double-listing as extracurricular and non-medical community service
- If space allows, giving examples of community service events helps paint a picture
- Included leadership position, emphasizing elected (vs randomly selected) for position

Getting Organized for the Work & Activities Section

- This is part of the application you can be continually preparing and logging as you go through college and/or gap year(s)
- Hours Completed and Anticipated are **in good faith**. However, do not over-exaggerate or falsify information.
  - The sooner you start more formally documenting your time spent participating various activities, the more accurate your number will be
  - TIP: *start a Google Sheet/Excel with each activity to track your time for each activity.*
  - TIP: *Use your Google or Outlook calendar as a reference point to determine previously documented time spent on activities*
- Brainstorm how you might group related or similar activities together
  - Ex. 1 entry for all "Honors/Awards/Recognitions", listing each within the description
  - Ex. 1 entry for all "Shadowing" endeavors, giving specific names/locations/hours for each event

Most Meaningful Experiences

Per AMCAS: "Applicants are asked to identify up to 3 experiences they consider to be 'most meaningful.' If applicants have 2 or more entries, they will be required to identify at least one as the more or most meaningful. When considering experiences that are the most meaningful, applicants might consider the transformative nature of the experience: the impact they made while engaging in the activity, what they learned, and the personal growth they experienced as a result of their participation."

- Additional Box with 1,325 characters (including spaces) to explain WHY the experience was meaningful.
  - Be reflective!
  - What you learned about yourself, what the experience taught you, how the experience influenced your journey-tell a story
  - **DOES NOT** need to be "medical" for it to be meaningful
  - It *can* be helpful to highlight activities that are different or will bring up different themes about your interests to help create a more multidimensional picture

Examples

"Throughout my entire undergraduate career, I was a highly engaged member of the Health Professions Association at Colby-Sawyer College. My participation in this club has strongly influenced by decision to pursue medical school and a career as a physician. I learned about the rigorous path to becoming a physician and gained an understanding of the career as a whole through my involvement in the club. I attended a variety of guest speakers ranging from physicians in the community to alumni pursuing graduate health profession studies. This allowed me to gain exposure to a variety of health profession fields and understand the role each has within a medical team. I was also committed to utilizing this as an opportunity to provide service to the local and school communities. I was passionate about pursuing the pre-med representative position in the club because I wanted to guide other students along their journey to pursuing medical school. I enjoyed serving as a mentor to fellow club members regarding the process of applying to medical school and discussing health profession career opportunities with them. This also allowed me to consider my own desire and motivations for pursuing medical school."

Examples-Research Focused

EXPERIENCE			
Experience Type:	Research/Lab	**Most Meaningful Experience:** Yes	
Experience Name:	Academic and Biotech Research	**Dates:** 08/2015 - 05/2018 06/2018 - 06/2020 08/2020 - 08/2022	**Total Hours:** 5000 **Total Hours:** 4160 **Total Hours:** 2087
Contact Name & Title:	Amar Sahay, Principal Investigator		
Contact Email:	Sahay.Amar@mgh.harvard.edu	**Contact Phone:** 6176434371	
Organization Name:	Harvard Stem Cell Institute/Massachusetts General Hosptial		
City / State / Country:	Boston / MA / United States of America (the)		
Experience Description:	With my desire to become a physician, I joined an undergrad lab where I felt I could impact patients through translational research. Screening FDA-approved drugs as a potential treatment for Porphyria, a rare disorder, made me excited for the potential impact of this project. Wanting to expand upon my research knowledge I obtained a research technician job in Dr. Sahay's neuroscience lab after college. My project was looking at the transcriptional mechanisms that control the division pattern of adult neural stems. The bridge between basic research and translation research became even more clear after joining a biotech start-up working in early drug discovery in the immuno-oncology field.		
Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:	During my time in Dr. Sahay's research lab, I learned many technical skills such as immunostaining assays and understanding genetic mouse models. I not only learned these new skills but more importantly, to think critically about how to address biological questions and interpret the results. Using clonal analysis to address my question on what are the transcriptional mechanisms controlling the division pattern of adult neural stem cells, I was able to identify a transcription factor that increases the number of stem cells in our mouse model. Working on this project gave me a new appreciation for how basic research can be applied clinically to patients. Identifying molecular regulators of neural stem cell activation could reveal new potential mechanisms to target adult hippocampal neurogenesis, which is largely declined in aging and Alzheimer's disease. It was clear that these discoveries could have a huge impact on a patient's life. This experience will allow me to integrate my role as a researcher into becoming a physician to address not only the needs of present patients but also to advance healthcare for future generations through translational research. This project is currently in the process of submitting for publication.		

Examples- Clinical Focused

EXPERIENCE		
Experience Type:	Paid Employment - Medical/Clinical	**Most Meaningful Experience:** Yes
Experience Name:	Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA)	**Dates:** 08/2015 - 02/2018 **Total Hours:** 3000 07/2020 - 08/2022 **Total Hours:** 300
Contact Name & Title:	Diane Tisdale, Human Resoursces	
Contact Email:	dtisdale@rivermead.org	**Contact Phone:** 6039240062
Organization Name:	Rivermead Retirement Community	
City / State / Country:	Peterborough / NH / United States of America (the)	
Experience Description:	After obtaining my LNA, I began working in a retirement community helping residents with their daily activities, such as bathing, getting dressed, and assisting with meal time. I also was responsible for taking vital signs and reporting this information back to the nurse. I was able to work in multiple units of the nursing home, which enabled me to develop different communication techniques for a diverse array of patients. As a way to build on my experience, I also worked at a hospital inpatient unit and I currently am working as a home health aid for my surrounding towns. Working in different environments gave me a better understanding of the different healthcare facilities.	
Most Meaningful Experience Remarks:	Working at the retirement community with the same residents for three years I came to know each resident personally and cultivated deep connections with them. As the relationships grew, I got to know their preferences such as how Mrs. Ray liked a certain brand of tea with dinner. It was noticing these details that led to friendships. Each shift, my residents and I would talk about new life updates as I would ask them about their weekly card games with friends or visits with family, and they, in turn, asked me about my college journey. Having these close relationships proved to be important during one particular experience. I walked in on Mrs. Dawn crying in her chair with her phone in her hand. As I sat down and reached for her other hand, I asked what was wrong. She explained to me how her family had not called in days. I knew this was untrue as I had just seen the family the day before visiting. Mrs. Dawn, like many other residents I cared for, had dementia. For the next twenty minutes, we chatted about her family. I then looked at her and asked if she wanted me to help her call them. She turned and smiled at me. Working as an LNA taught me how to provide support and compassion to those who needed it the most. These qualities will be at the forefront as I continue my journey to become a physician.	

Letters of Evaluation/"Letters of Recommendation"

- Up to 10 letters associated with AMCAS Application
- Upload/Submission process directly to application system OR third-party system such as Interfolio
- Types of Letters
  - Committee Letter: may or may not include additional letters of support
  - Letter Packet: **does NOT include evaluative letter from pre-health committee or advisor**
  - Individual Letter: written by and representing a <u>single author</u>.
    - If you already included this letter within a Committee Letter or Letter Packet, DO NOT also send it as an individual letter
- How many letters will you need?
  - Bare minimum 3: two sciences professors and one non science professor or extracurricular supervisor*

Please see the upcoming session on Letters for more information!

April 20th, 2023 7pm EST via Zoom

Personal Comments Essay (aka Personal Statement)

- 5,300 characters (including spaces)
  - Be mindful that each line break between paragraphs will likely "cost" 3 characters per
- Plain Text Entry: bulleted lists, indents, bold, italic, underline do NOT appear
- This is one aspect of the primary application that can set you apart
  - Tell YOUR story

Please see slides from February 28, 2023 session for in-depth information!

Personal Statement PDF can be found at:

https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/nhinbre/inbre-101-resources/medical-school-mentoring-program/

Test Scores

- MCAT scores are <u>not required</u> for submission of the application, but you MUST list any test date you are registered for to inform schools you are registered to take the exam.
  - Each school may vary in MCAT test dates they accept: be aware & informed ahead of time!
- Must have or be registered for at least one MCAT test date to submit application
- If GRE or other graduate-level admissions tests have been taken, option to also include those scores

Tips and Tricks- Applying without an MCAT score

- To get verified you must have a MCAT score or an anticipated MCAT test date selected
- You want to submit your application as soon as possible since the medical school application process is rolling.
- BUT, what if you don't have an MCAT score?
  - **You must weigh the pros and cons**

1) Add one school to you application so it can get verified-once the score comes back you can decide if you want to add more schools
2) Add all schools to your application without a score and hope it comes back towards your goal score
3) Wait until you have your MCAT and apply next year
4) Wait until you have your MCAT score and apply late in the cycle (this May be OK for D.O schools since many of their due dates are later in the cycle)

TIPS

- Get familiar with the "Applicant Guide" for your desired application service(s) early and refer to those guides often while completing the application!
- START THINKING or DRAFTING for the various narrative sections of the application **early**
  - Prepare resume/CV and review with pre-med/career advisors & mentors
  - Start calculating/estimating hours for activities sections
  - Check in regarding character limits for various narrative sections
- Check with the application service you are going to be submitting opening dates may vary
- Check the schools you are applying to deadline for the primary application
- Double check all requirements for medical schools before applying: some now require ethical and personality tests such as Casper
- Apply early! Its a rolling admissions process so maximize your odds of getting into medical school.

https://www.love4words.com/editortips/

Resources

- AAMC: https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school-amcas/applying-medical-school-amcas
- AACOMAS: https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/aacomas-application
- Application Academy: https://store.medicalschoolhq.net/application-academy
- Youtube: Medical School HQ: Application Renovation
  - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLb0fnUyoo-8NIjd9276ah0rd3S6rKRWbm
- NH-INBRE Alumni mentors (Us!)
- Pre-Med Advisors

Contact Us:

Haley Zanga:
hzanga@luc.edu

Catrina Hood:
hcatrina28@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE! *(Last session of the school year)*
Session 4: April 20th, 2023 at 7pm EST

Feedback Poll

Post-Presentation Q&A

Q) What about a high school transcript if I took some AP classes that appear on my transcript?

A) If you reported/claimed AP credit for AP courses completed in high school, those should appear on your official undergraduate transcript. When you manually enter your grades on the application (in addition to sending copy of official transcript), there is a designation for AP courses.

Catrina - Entering the coursework is annoying but pretty straightforward. If you have more "unique" courses on your transcript that you aren't sure how to "classify", you can always reach out to the application servicer and talk to a representative about how to classify things. Ex. I took a Nepali history/writing course for "English credit" @ CSC but wasn't sure how to classify it

Q) can I say that a job I got for my gap year is an anticipated event or would it go in the secondaries?

A) If you know what the job/tasks are and who you are working for, you can add that as an anticipated event. Project out when you know you will be done/starting school. But if for your gap year you do not have something specific lined up, do not list on AMCAS. Might be hard to discuss job you have not done yet, if you already have multiple positions to add to your list, consider leaving off.

Q) How many hours should a person have for volunteer and shadowing hours?

A) Hard to answer this question, each person/medical school is different. Researching online, you can look up these averages for specific schools using MSAR or other resources. Engage in activities that you know you can discuss. Want to emphasize to be your most authentic self when deciding what activities to undertake. This will show through your application and will highlight your interests and passions.
It is really so unique person to person, depending on what the rest of each individual's application looks like. Ideally, all schools would/should do a "holistic review" and take into consideration an individual's life experiences instead of just valuing a certain number of hours.

I would always recommend a balance of clinical versus non-clinical endeavors (ex. community service). Of course, med school admissions folks are hoping to see applicants engaged in the clinical environment & that can happen through a variety of endeavors (volunteering, shadowing, paid patient care (EMS, LNA, Phlebotomy, etc.)", among others.

Regarding research:

Research is always valued for the reasons Haley highlighted! Medicine is 100% an evidence based practice. Med schools are definitely seeking applicants who they feel could navigate that experience of reviewing research articles, applying research to the real-world, and who can navigate the life lessons research brings (trial and error, failure, working toward a long-term goal, navigating adversities/challenging times, etc.). "Publications" are NOT NEEDED to be a successful med school applicant. It is always great if there is a "final product" of research: poster presentation, abstract submission/presentation @ research conference....and super cool if work gets published but not the end all-be all of a research endeavor. List posters, conference presentations, & any journal publications with the experience description.

Q) Do you suggest taking the GRE if you are taking the MCAT?

A) No, focus on taking MCAT if you know you want to do medical school. Take GRE if you want to keep other options open or have other plans.
GRE might be required if you are doing a post-bacc or medical masters program or other graduate/masters program. MD-PhD programs may require you take the GRE (though can't speak to this from experience).

Q) are the casper and preview exams required for the application verification?
A) No