

# Parallel Planning

So you want to go to a professional program in health care? That is a great goal. You are probably already aware that your academic background is especially important in entering these fields. Most of these programs take a limited number of people and are, therefore, highly competitive. Although you will often see minimal grade point averages listed, these are often far lower than the average GPAs accepted by these programs. Many of these schools also make use of standardized aptitude tests. If standardized tests aren't your thing, then you have another stumbling block on your path to fulfillment in a health career. Regardless of whether you have a 4.0 or a 3.0, you should have a parallel plan, a backup plan, a Plan B, so to speak. Even if you feel like your application is very competitive, having a backup plan is a good thing.

Things to consider:

- Are there related careers you might find just as fulfilling? For example, if you want to be an MD, you should also consider osteopathic medical programs and podiatry. PA and nurse practitioner programs might also be areas to explore.
- An array of medical fields are out there. A master's degree in public health might fit your interests. Medical informatics is a hot field if you like computers. You could always apply to the professional program you want after your master's is complete.
- Ask yourself: what can I do to improve my credentials and experience if I take a year off and apply (or apply again)?
- One of the most important things to remember if you are applying at the end of your junior year: your senior year is still important. If you don't get in by the end of your senior year, what has changed in your application? Many students end up re-submitting what was essentially a failed application. Keep your grades up during your senior year, gain more medical experience, and keep up the volunteer work. No senioritis for you!
- Many people are accepted when they apply again. So keep trying, but be smart about your applications and critical about your credentials.

