

# Oral Medicine Specialist interview questions

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## What to expect

Interviews for Oral Medicine Specialist roles typically assess clinical reasoning, patient communication, and collaboration skills. You may encounter a mix of clinical scenario questions, behavioural questions, and technical questions about procedures and medications.

- **Clinical reasoning:** Questions that test your diagnostic approach and treatment planning for complex oral conditions.
- **Scenario-based:** Hypothetical patient cases that require you to demonstrate judgement under pressure.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past experiences working in multidisciplinary teams or handling difficult situations.
- **Technical:** Questions about specific procedures, medications, or equipment you use.
- **Patient communication:** How you explain diagnoses and manage patient expectations.

The interview process often begins with a phone screen, followed by a panel interview with senior specialists and department heads. You may be asked to discuss case studies or present a clinical scenario. Some employers include a practical component, such as reviewing biopsy results or treatment plans.

## 1. Walk me through your approach to diagnosing a patient with a persistent oral ulcer that has not responded to initial treatment.

### Why they ask

This question assesses your systematic clinical reasoning and ability to consider a broad differential diagnosis.

### How to structure your answer

A structured walk-through: start with history and examination, then investigations, differential diagnosis, and management plan.

#### Example answer

*"I would begin by taking a detailed history, including duration, associated symptoms, and any systemic conditions. I would examine the ulcer's characteristics, size, and location. I would consider a differential diagnosis including squamous cell carcinoma, lichen planus, or aphthous ulcers. I would perform a biopsy if indicated, and order blood tests to rule out systemic causes like nutritional deficiencies or autoimmune conditions. Based on results, I would initiate appropriate treatment, such as topical corticosteroids or refer to oncology if malignant."*

## 2. Tell me about a time you had to collaborate with a medical specialist to manage a patient with a complex systemic condition.

### Why they ask

This behavioural question explores your teamwork and communication skills in multidisciplinary care.

### How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

#### Example answer

*"Situation: A patient with lupus presented with severe oral ulcers. Task: I needed to coordinate with their rheumatologist to adjust immunosuppressive therapy. Action: I reviewed their medication history and communicated my findings, suggesting a biopsy to rule out malignancy. Result: The biopsy was*

*benign, and with adjusted therapy, the patient's oral symptoms improved significantly within weeks, avoiding further invasive procedures."*

### **3. You suspect a patient has oral cancer, but they are reluctant to undergo a biopsy. How do you handle this?**

#### **Why they ask**

This scenario tests your judgement under pressure and your ability to balance patient autonomy with clinical urgency.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Acknowledge patient concerns, explain risks, provide education, and explore barriers.

#### **Example answer**

*"I would first validate their concerns, explaining that a biopsy is the only way to confirm a diagnosis. I would discuss the potential consequences of delay, including progression of disease. I would ask about their fears, perhaps addressing pain or cost. I would involve the patient in decision-making, offering to speak with their family or GP. If they still refuse, I would document thoroughly and arrange close follow-up."*

### **4. What is your experience with prescribing medications for chronic oral pain, and how do you monitor their effectiveness?**

#### **Why they ask**

This technical question probes your pharmacological knowledge and patient monitoring practices.

#### **How to structure your answer**

A technical explanation of your approach, including medication classes, monitoring, and side effects.

#### **Example answer**

*"I commonly prescribe topical corticosteroids, antifungals, and in some cases systemic medications like gabapentin for neuropathic pain. I monitor effectiveness through patient-reported pain scales and clinical examination. I also watch for side effects such as oral candidiasis with inhaled steroids, and adjust dosages accordingly. I ensure regular follow-up to reassess treatment goals."*

### **5. How do you stay current with the latest guidelines and research in oral medicine?**

#### **Why they ask**

This process question assesses your commitment to continuing professional development.

#### **How to structure your answer**

A process description: continuing education, professional memberships, literature review.

#### **Example answer**

*"I subscribe to journals like Oral Diseases and the Journal of Oral Pathology & Medicine. I attend conferences such as those run by the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons and the Australian Dental Association. I also participate in peer review meetings at my hospital and complete online modules through AHPRA-accredited providers."*

### **6. How would you explain a diagnosis of oral lichen planus to a patient who is anxious about cancer?**

#### **Why they ask**

This patient communication question evaluates your empathy and ability to convey complex information clearly.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Empathy and clear communication: explain condition, address fears, provide management plan.

#### Example answer

*"I would start by reassuring them that lichen planus is not cancer, but a chronic inflammatory condition. I would explain that it can cause discomfort and needs monitoring, but the risk of malignant transformation is very low. I would provide written information and discuss treatment options like topical steroids. I would encourage them to ask questions and schedule a follow-up to review their concerns."*