Sport and Exercise Physician interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Sport and Exercise Physician roles typically assess your clinical reasoning, communication skills, and ability to work in multidisciplinary teams. Expect a mix of clinical scenarios, behavioural questions, and discussion of your experience with specific tools and techniques.

- **Clinical reasoning:** Questions that ask you to work through a diagnosis or management plan for a sport or exercise-related condition.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about how you have handled past situations, such as complex rehabilitation or difficult conversations with athletes.
- **Scenario-based:** Questions that put you in a hypothetical situation, often involving acute injury management or return-to-play decisions.
- **Collaboration:** Questions about how you work with physiotherapists, coaches, and other health professionals to coordinate care.
- **Technical:** Questions about your experience with tools such as musculoskeletal ultrasound, gait analysis, or electronic medical records.

The interview usually begins with an introduction and overview of your training and experience. Then you may be given clinical scenarios or case studies to work through aloud. Behavioural questions follow, often using the STAR format. You may also be asked about your approach to specific situations, such as providing medical coverage at events. The panel may include a mix of sports physicians, physiotherapists, and administrative staff.

1. How would you approach the diagnosis and management of a recreational runner with persistent knee pain?

Why they ask

This assesses your clinical reasoning, ability to take a history, examine, and formulate a management plan.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your approach step by step: history, examination, investigations, differential diagnosis, and management. Highlight key considerations for this population.

Example answer

“I would start by taking a detailed history, including the onset, location, and nature of the pain, as well as training load, footwear, and any previous injuries. I would ask about aggravating and relieving factors. On examination, I would assess the knee for effusion, range of motion, and stability, and also check the hip and ankle as they can contribute to knee pain. I would consider common diagnoses such as patellofemoral pain syndrome, iliotibial band syndrome, or meniscal injury. Depending on findings, I might order imaging such as an X-ray or ultrasound. My management would focus on load modification, strengthening exercises, and possibly referral to a physiotherapist for a structured rehabilitation program. I would also educate the runner on gradual return to running and injury prevention.”

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a complex rehabilitation case where progress was slower than expected.

Why they ask

This looks at your problem-solving, communication, and persistence in challenging cases.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Be specific about the case, your role, what you did, and the outcome.

Example answer

“Situation: I had an athlete with a chronic Achilles tendinopathy that was not responding to initial treatment. Task: I needed to adjust the rehabilitation plan to help them return to sport. Action: I reviewed their training load and found they were doing too much too soon. I collaborated with their physiotherapist to create a more gradual loading program, and I used musculoskeletal ultrasound to monitor the tendon. I also had a frank conversation with the athlete about realistic timelines. Result: Over several weeks, they gradually improved and were able to return to their sport without pain. I learned the importance of patience and clear communication.”

3. You are providing medical coverage at a community sporting event. A player collapses on the field. Walk me through your immediate response.

Why they ask

This tests your ability to respond to an emergency, prioritise safety, and make quick decisions.

How to structure your answer

Use a structured approach: ensure safety, assess responsiveness, call for help, initiate basic life support if needed, and manage the situation until further help arrives.

Example answer

“First, I would ensure the scene is safe for myself and others. Then I would check the player's responsiveness by calling their name and gently shaking them. If unresponsive, I would call for help and ask someone to bring the emergency equipment, including an AED. I would check their airway, breathing, and circulation. If they are not breathing normally, I would start CPR and apply the AED as soon as it arrives. If they are breathing but unconscious, I would place them in the recovery position and monitor them until the ambulance arrives. Throughout, I would communicate clearly with other medical staff and keep a record of what happened.”

4. How do you work with physiotherapists and other allied health professionals to ensure coordinated care?

Why they ask

This assesses your teamwork and communication skills, which are essential in sports medicine.

How to structure your answer

Describe your general approach: communication, shared goal setting, case conferencing, and respect for each other's roles.

Example answer

“I believe in clear, open communication. When I see a patient, I make sure to share my assessment and diagnosis with the physiotherapist involved. We set shared goals for rehabilitation and agree on timelines. I often participate in case conferences or joint consultations, especially for complex cases. I also respect the physiotherapist's expertise in exercise prescription and manual therapy, and I value their input in return-to-play decisions. This collaborative approach ensures the patient gets consistent messages and a seamless care experience.”

5. What is your experience with musculoskeletal ultrasound and how do you use it in your practice?

Why they ask

This checks your technical skills and how you integrate tools into clinical practice.

How to structure your answer

Explain your training and experience, then describe specific applications, such as diagnostic imaging or guided injections. Mention benefits and limitations.

Example answer

“I have completed training in musculoskeletal ultrasound and use it regularly in my practice. I use it to assess soft tissue injuries, such as tendon tears or ligament sprains, and to guide injections for conditions like plantar fasciitis or rotator cuff tendinopathy. It helps me confirm my clinical diagnosis and improve the accuracy of procedures. I also use it to monitor healing over time. However, I am aware of its limitations, such as operator dependence, so I always combine ultrasound findings with a thorough clinical assessment. I also use PACS to store and review images.”