WRITING AND COMMUNICATION CENTER
THE HARVARD CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE CENTER | HARVARD CATALYST

"TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF" RESPONSE EXAMPLES

The following examples are inspired by personas from the Northwestern CTSA personas project.

Example #1:

Opening | Optional | Skills & Background | Interests & Impact | Connecting & Closing

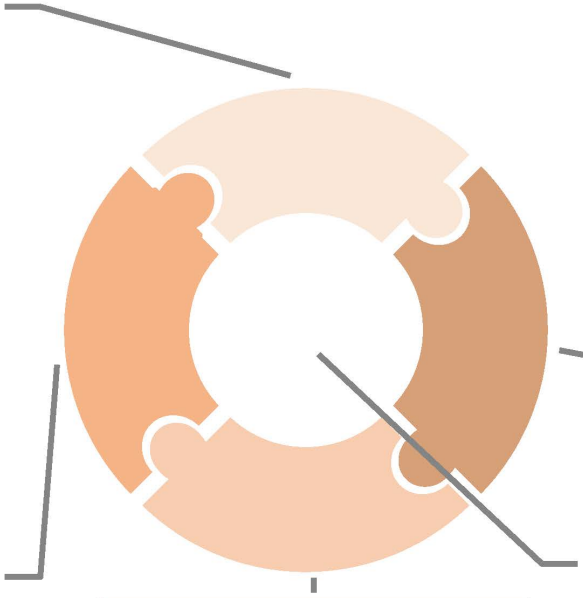
Your interviewer(s): Hiring manager with a research background in pulmonology who serves as faculty at Harvard Medical School.

(1) OPENING

- Melody Zainal
- MD from Harvard Medical School, residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital
- Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School
- KL2 Scholar

(4) INTERESTS & IMPACT

- Pursuing project that analyzes pulmonary data from wide variety of sources
- Hoping to integrate theories, data, techniques, and tools and build community of practice in field of study



(3) SKILLS & BACKGROUND

- Maintain clinical practice 25% of time, other 75% dedicated to research
- Focus on data collection and analysis, advancing data harmonization efforts among various datasets

(2) OPTIONAL

- Research focuses on lung cancer
- Decided to become lung cancer researcher after father died of lung cancer 15 years ago

(5) CONNECTING & CLOSING

- Interested in work that institution leads in pulmonary research
- Looking to join department that fosters interdisciplinary research
- Goals of building and managing team and seeking funding through the NIH and other sources

Complete answer:

My name is Melody Zainal. As part of my academic training, I received my MD from Harvard Medical School and completed my residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Currently, I am an Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School and working on wrapping up a KL2 project.

My research focuses on lung cancer, which has been a passion of mine since my father suffered and passed away of lung cancer 15 years ago. That experience shaped so much about who I am, and has really influenced my desire to maintain both my clinical practice that supports patients and conduct research to identify new therapeutics.

My skills and background have prepared me well for this job. I maintain my clinical practice 25% of the time and the other 75% is dedicated to my research. Throughout the duration of my KL2, I spent a lot of time focused on data collection and analysis, and advancing data harmonization efforts among various datasets. This project has been a challenging but rewarding opportunity to analyze pulmonary data from a wide variety of sources. The work has allowed me to integrate theories, data, techniques, and tools and build a community of practice in my field of study.

With my background and experiences in mind, I am excited to explore this opportunity with you. I see a great deal of overlap between the skills I have been honing in my KL2 project and the innovative work of your pulmonary research group, and am looking to join a department just like this one that fosters interdisciplinary research and practice.

WRITING AND COMMUNICATION CENTER
THE HARVARD CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE CENTER | HARVARD CATALYST

"TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF" RESPONSE EXAMPLES

Example #2: Opening | Skills & Background | Interests & Impact | Connecting & Closing

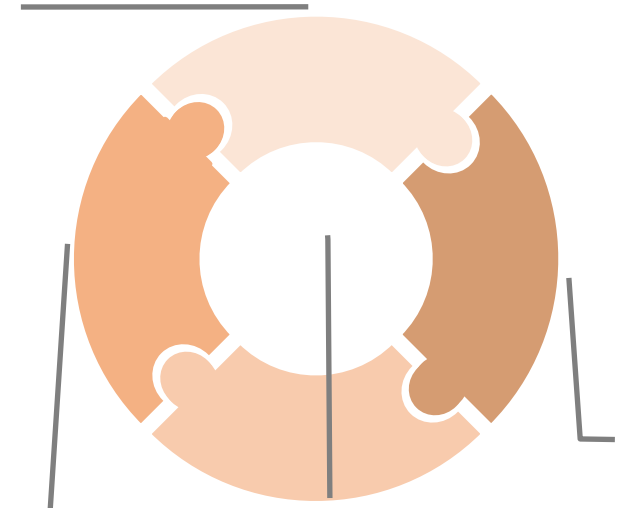
Your interviewer(s): Panel of clinical researchers and biostatisticians who work in the same department and will collaborate with the new data analyst.

(1) OPENING

- Jim Blair
- BS in Physics from Harvard College
- Data Analyst at Harvard Medical School

(2) SKILLS & BACKGROUND

- Coding and data tools include SQL and SQL server, R, Tableau, Git
- Query enterprise data warehouse to find data for clinical researchers
- Compile retrieved data into reports and pull information for Research Performance Progress Reports (RPPRs)
- Involved in five or six different projects during given week, and must be mindful of permissions and approvals for sensitive data, as well as time spent on projects for billing purposes



(3) INTERESTS & IMPACT

- Work with researchers to determine exactly what they are looking for in terms of data, and have developed good sense of where to search for various types of data and when to stop
- Beginning to build databases for clinical studies
- Co-author publications for study-related databases
- Believe that starting with understandable, clean, and accurate data is crux of reproducible science, allowing for complex statistical and mathematical analyses later in research process
- Advocate and embody open science practices

(4) CONNECTING & CLOSING

- Enjoy this type of work and believe it is vital first piece of research puzzle
- Looking to join institution and department that values and invests in data management
- Excited by opportunities to collaborate with biostatisticians and aid each team's work
- Hope to continue to work with PIs and publish more

Complete answer:

My name is Jim Blair. I am a Data Analyst at Harvard Medical School. I studied Physics at Harvard College, and tend to describe myself as a practical data nerd—I love the challenging "puzzle" of data analysis, and enjoy navigating the unique constraints and parameters of the research environment. Right now, I am involved in five or six different projects during a given week, so I have really honed my skills in time management and project management while being mindful of permissions and approvals for sensitive data. I work with many different researchers, figuring out exactly what they are looking for in terms of data. I have developed a good sense of where to search for various types of data and when to stop. To carry out my work, I use a variety of coding and data tools, primarily querying the enterprise data warehouse to find data for clinical researchers. I also compile the retrieved data into reports and pull information for RPPRs.

Currently, I am working on building databases for clinical studies and have been co-author on three publications for study-related databases that I have built. I am a strong advocate for open science practices, and believe that starting with understandable, clean, and accurate data is the crux of reproducible science, allowing for complex statistical and mathematical analyses later in the research process.

All of this is why I was thrilled to see the position open up in your department. I truly enjoy my work and believe it is a vital first piece of the research puzzle. Your investment in data management is world-renowned, and I am excited by new opportunities to collaborate with biostatisticians and aid your team's work.

SOURCE: *Personas Project* (n.d.). https://data2health.github.io/CTS-Personas/