

Navigating the Effects of COVID-19 on the 20-2021 Residency Application Cycle

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Objectives

- Discuss the implications of COVID-19 on the residency cycle
- Outline some actions applicants and programs can take to mitigate harmful effects.



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COVID Implications: Known vs. Unknown

	Same	Different	Concerns
Applications	ERAS	Timeline	Increase numbers?
Screening	Full application	No Step 2 scores?, LORs	Timeline, numbers
Interviews	Interviewing applicants	Virtual	No in person interactions (Applicant and Program) Technology (learning, interviewers training, running interview day)
Post interviews	Rank list NRMP rules	Bias, anxiety	Communication between applicant and programs



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JAMA Potential Implications of COVID-19 for the 2020-2021 Residency Application Cycle

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- Adjust the residency application timeline
- Modify application requirements
- Encourage holistic review
- Limit the number of applications
- Expand program information available to applicants
- Improve the quality of information programs receive
- Temporarily make exceptions to the NRMP all-in policy
- Cap the number of interviews a student can accept
- Implement preference-signaling mechanisms



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Coalition of Physician Accountability Recommendations

Recommendations for Away Rotations and Interviews for Graduate Medical Education Fellowship Applicants During the 2020-2021 Academic Year

- **Recommendation #1:** For the 2020-21 academic year, away rotations for residents will be discouraged, except...
- **Recommendation #2:** -- commit to online interviews and virtual visits for all applicants, rather than in-person interviews for the entire cycle.
- **Recommendation #3 – General Communications**—transparency and timely communications among all stakeholders.



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Specialty Specific Guidelines

- Anesthesiology
- Cardiothoracic Surgery
 - T204 recommendations on Visiting External Medical Student Rotations during COVID-19 pandemic
 - T204 statement on research during COVID-19 pandemic
- Dermatology
- Emergency Medicine
 - ACEP, SBAHA, and CCOPE joint statement on Medical Students and COVID-19: Education and Safety Considerations
- Family Medicine
- General Surgery
 - ACGE Resident Statement: 2020-2021 Medical Student Experience and Application Cycle Update (July 15, 2020)
- Internal Medicine
 - Joint External-IMB Selection Board (Internal Medicine)
- Medicine - Pediatrics
 - Medicine Pediatrics is working under the guidance of both IM (AAMC) and Pediatrics (SPEP) COVID-19 task forces, including recommendations for virtual interviews, no all-in requirement for SOAP requirement to review applications, and flexibility in LOR requirements.
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- OB-GYN
- Ophthalmology
 - Ophthalmology Resident Welfare Q&A
- Orthopaedic Surgery
- Otolaryngology
- Pediatrics
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Plastic Surgery
- Psychiatry
- Radiation Oncology
- Radiology
- Urology
- Vascular Surgery

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residency/article/specialty-response-covid-19/>



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Virtual Experiences & Impact on Underrepresented Medical Students during COVID-19

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“Protecting underrepresented students and residents during COVID-19”

AMA, June 2, 2020

- COVID-19 impacting all areas of society but not equally
- Additional stressors of structural racism
- Disruptions from COVID-19 amplify underlying inequalities
- Responsibility of AMA to advocate for all medical students; reverse the historic active exclusion of racially marginalized groups (specifically Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans)

Taken from: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/protecting-underrepresented-students-and-residents-during-covid-19>



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Examples of Educational Inequity

- Shift to virtual platforms (?access to technology & dedicated spaces; virtual interviews)
- Loss of enrichment activities that may boost a URM's application (research, shadowing, global experiences, clinical electives)
- Geographic inconsistencies (impact on testing and education)



Taken from: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/protecting-underrepresented-students-and-residents-during-covid-19>



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Examples of Educational Inequity



- Limitations to access to advocacy (ie., letters of recommendation)
- Suspension of away rotations
- Emotional toll on student well-being (“weathering”); could impair ability to succeed

Taken from: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/protecting-underrepresented-students-and-residents-during-covid-19>



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AMA Recommendations

- Engage URM students, residents & faculty in adjustments to curriculum, planning and recruitment process
- Amplify efforts to increase inclusive learning
- Intentional outreach to URM students
- Develop targeted outreach to facilitate communication and exchange between URM students and residency programs

Taken from: <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/protecting-underrepresented-students-and-residents-during-covid-19>



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University of Michigan Department of Ob/GYN



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Michigan Medicine: Our Culture, Our values, Virtual Experience

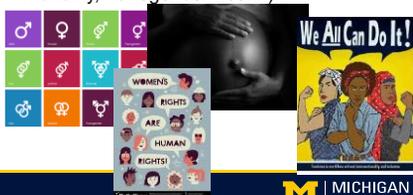
- Hosted on 8/20/20
- 90 min session dedicated to sharing the culture of Umich with emphasis on diversity & inclusion
- URM members of department represented & experiences shared
- 90 participants with 26 URM (~29%)
 - Black, Latinx, Native American



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Follow Up Virtual Experience

- Plan for Leadership Conference with breakouts (advocacy, black maternal mortality, transgender health)



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Considerations for now & the future...

- Distance traveled score
- URM virtual experiences dedicated to CV building, research opportunities, application boosters, virtual interviewing techniques
- Residency programs must be **intentional** about diversity



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Conclusions

- “Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach.” –Tony Robbins
- The new climate has required us to be flexible and creative
- Despite these changes, we must remain committed to diversity and equity



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Student Perspectives

Applying to Residency during COVID-19

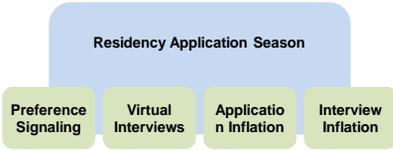
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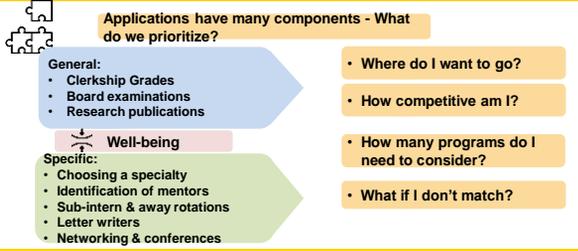
Student perspectives - OUTLINE

About me:
 • 4th year at U of M
 • Applying into General Surgery
 • Virtual Interviews Student Task Force Rep



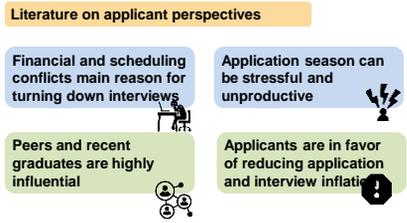
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The pre-COVID application



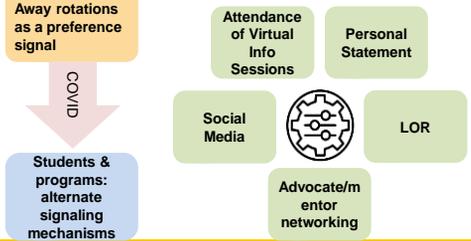
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The pre-COVID application



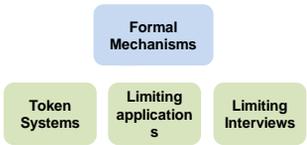
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Preference Signaling Where do I want to go?



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Preference Signaling Where do I want to go?



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Virtual Interviews

- Cost Saving
- Time Saving
- Convenient



- Different than in person social interaction
- Difficult to get a sense of the local environment
- Potential for application/interview inflation

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Application Inflation

• How many programs do I need to consider?

Consequences of increasing numbers of applications



- Cost
- Loss of Holistic Review
- Loss of Preference signaling

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Application Inflation

• How many programs do I need to consider?

Perspectives on Reducing application inflation



- A cap on applications
- Early/outside the match acceptances
- Home institution acceptances

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Interview Inflation

• How many programs do I need to consider?

Consequences of completing excessive interview offers



- Interview fatigue
- Disparity in numbers of interviews
- Positions and applicants going unmatched

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Interview Inflation

• How many programs do I need to consider?

Perspectives on Reducing Interview Inflation



- A cap on interviews
- Secondary applications
- Standardized interview season

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Student approach to application season

Overcome the "prisoner's dilemma"



- Apply only to a few programs of interest and allow for holistic review – Best option for all
- Applying broadly to play the odds -results in worse overall outcomes

Key assumption for a "prisoner's dilemma" strategy: lack of information

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