

## **Applying for Internal Medicine Residency: FAQ**

Below are some questions that students frequently ask when applying to Internal Medicine residency. We hope this document is helpful to you. If you have any additional questions or if you need clarification on anything below, feel free to contact your assigned Department of Medicine (DOM) advisor: Drs. Hamilton or Kogan. We are here to help you through the process.

### **APPLYING TO PROGRAMS**

#### **How many programs should I apply to?**

*All students should apply to at least 12 programs. Some students will need to apply to more. Your assigned DOM advisor will help you figure out the number of programs you need to apply to.*

#### **Can I apply to primary care and categorical programs?**

*Yes. It is not uncommon that students apply to both when they are interested in general medicine/primary care or when they are interested in a medicine specialty that has a significant outpatient focus (endocrinology, rheumatology, infectious diseases). Within an institution, you will need to figure out if the Primary Care program has a different program number. You should note that many institutions will put heavy pressure on applicants to decide whether they are more interested in primary care or categorical, but this request does not happen until after the interview.*

#### **Can I apply to Med-Peds (or Med-derm) and internal medicine at the same program?**

*Yes you can. You should note that many institutions will put heavy pressure on applicants to decide which program they are more interested in, but this request does not happen until after the interview.*

#### **Can I apply in primary care Internal Medicine and Family Medicine?**

*We recommend trying to decide which specialty you are most interested in prior to applying. If you cannot decide, you can apply in both, but you should not apply to a Family Medicine and Internal Medicine program in the same institution.*

#### **What do I need to do differently if I am couples matching?**

*You will need to apply to more programs (at least 20). You should also identify 4-5 cities where you and your partner each apply to multiple programs in that city. This practice increases the likelihood of match options. It is critical to specifically discuss couples matching strategy with your advisor. Your specific plan will heavily depend on which specialties you and your partner are choosing.*

### **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

#### **Should I have a different personal statement for different programs?**

*No. This is not necessary. However, if you are applying in Medicine and Med-Peds, applicants*

typically will have two different personal statements.

## **STEP 2**

### **Should I take Step 2 early?**

*It is student dependent. If you had a score of greater than 235 of Step 1, the answer is no. If you scored less than 235 on Step 1, you should discuss this with your DOM advisor. We will help you to figure out if it makes sense to take Step 2 early. It depends on multiple factors including your academic record and your performance on shelf exams during Module 4.*

## **SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS**

### **Should I have advocacy calls to try to get an interview before I hear about whether I have been offered an interview?**

*In general, the answer is no. However, once we hear folks are getting interviews for a particular institution, the answer may become yes. We typically only make one advocacy call per student, so it should be for a program you are strongly interested in (would rank 1 or 2) and a program that we think the call can make a difference. It is important these calls are made before all interview slots are booked. This typically is the end of October.*

### **If I have a top program I am interested in and do not hear by the end of October, what should I do?**

*Discuss this with your DOM faculty advisor. We can discuss the possibility of getting an interview at the program based on information available about the current match year.*

### **What should I do if I am not getting a lot of interviews?**

*We like to make sure every student has at least 8 programs they interview at. If you do not have 8 interviews by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in October, contact your DOM advisor immediately.*

### **How many interviews can I schedule in a week?**

*Do not schedule more than three interviews per week, and potentially only two if significant travel between interviews is required. Too many interviews in a short period of time can lead to fatigue which might be misinterpreted as disinterest in the program. Also, when making travel plans, leave adequate time when traveling to get to programs and interviews in case there are travel delays.*

### **Does it matter when in the season I interview?**

*No. It does not matter. You are not more competitive at a program if you interview early or late. However, you should recognize that you will get tired towards the end of the interview season. Sometime interview trail burnout can make applicants appear tired, disinterested, and lacking energy (typically characteristics programs are NOT looking for). Therefore, to the extent possible, try to schedule programs you are very interested in towards the middle of your interview line-up.*

### **Can I cancel interviews?**

*You want to go on at least 8-10 interviews. You can consider canceling some interviews if you have more than 8-10 scheduled. We recommend that you discuss this with your DOM advisor. Try to give programs as much lead time as possible so someone else can have the interview spot. Do not cancel within 2 weeks.*

## **THE INTERVIEW DAY**

### **Should I go to the applicant dinner the night before the interview?**

*Yes for a few reasons. One, it conveys interest in the program. Two, and more importantly, it gives you a lot of information about the program and its residents (often more than the formal interview day).*

### **What should I bring with me on the interview day?**

*We recommend you bring a folder with extra copies of your CV (in case you are asked). You can put copies of your publications in the folder (only to be shared if asked). Never hurts to bring some breath mints.*

### **Can I leave early on the interview day?**

*We do not recommend that you leave early and you should not ask for permission to leave early. It sends a message to the program that you are not interested.*

### **Should I try to get my interview schedule ahead of time?**

*No. Most programs will not have a schedule for you ahead of time.*

### **Do I need to make sure I get time with the program director?**

*Some programs will have all applicants meet – usually very briefly – with the program director on the day of the interview, but this is not the norm at larger programs. If the interview day is not structured this way, there is no mandate for you to wrangle one-on-one time with the program director. S/he is trusting the rest of the interview selection committee to help with intern selection, and applicants who aggressively seek out time with the program director are more likely to make a negative (and lasting) impression than to help their chances of matching to that program.*

### **How can I contact Penn alumni on the interview day?**

*Before going to a program you can check with Student Affairs who keeps lists of where students have matched (the list is also on VC 2000). It is extremely helpful to talk to Penn students to get their impression of the program, since they will have a similar frame of reference.*

### **What should I do about contacting programs after I interview?**

*You are NOT expected to contact the residency programs after you have interviewed. It is reasonable to thank programs for visit or interviewers for taking the time, but this is not expected and will not affect your rank at that program. Do not commit to a program as being your number one choice unless they are. You do not need to contact a program to let them know they are your number one, especially if you do not have a clear number one choice.*

## **KEEPING APPLICATION UPDATED**

**Should I update my CV when I get publications or another course grade? Should I email the program director?**

*Program directors will not automatically re-review updated materials. For most elective courses, there is typically no need to notify the program director. The exception may be an ICU rotation or a sub-internship done later in the year. You can discuss this with your DOM advisor. You can notify programs about publications; however, you should only send 1 email update to a program.*

## **AWAY ROTATIONS/SECOND LOOKS**

**Should I do an away rotation?**

*Most of the time, the answer is no. In Internal Medicine, the programs are so big that this is not the cultural expectation unlike other specialties where there is an expectation for away rotations. Most of the time, you have more to lose doing an away rotation than what you might gain. Think of an away rotation as a month long interview. Your knowledge base will be judged as well as your ability to work in a team. You will not be familiar with the hospital, processes of care (the electronic health record, where to find things, etc). You may not be assigned a team that you get along with particularly well. That being said, there are instances when an away rotation might be beneficial. Sometimes, an away rotation may help you to secure an interview if is a program you would be unlikely you get an interview at. By and large, most Penn students do not do away rotations. If you are considering an away rotation, you should discuss this with your DOM advisor.*

**Do I need to do a second look to be competitive for residency?**

*No. Programs do not expect students to do a second look. Remember that a second look is also an opportunity for a program to take a second look at you (so be on your best behavior). Second looks should only be used if you need more information to make a decision about your rank list. It does not afford you any advantage otherwise.*

## **ADVOCACY CALLS/CONTACTING PROGRAMS**

**Do I need to have someone make an advocacy call to the program I rank # 1?**

*No, you do not necessarily need to do this. Many students do choose to have an advocacy call/email made/sent on their behalf. They sometimes do make a difference. But many students end up at their first choice program without an advocacy call. Importantly, there should only be one call by one person. It must only be done to the program you are ranking number 1.*

**Should I let my second and third choice programs know I am ranking them highly?**

*No, because it says you aren't ranking them first.*

## **PROGRAMS CONTACTING APPLICANTS**

**When a program calls/emails me to tell me I am ranked highly/ranked to match. . . what do I say**

**if I don't know how I am ranking them or they are not my # 1?**

*The majority of programs call without the expectation that you provide any information about your intent (it is actually a match violation if they try to ask you your intention). You can either not pick up the phone if you see a "suspect" area code or you can be gracious and say you are still finalizing your list but thank them for the call and let them know you will call if you have any questions. We highly recommend using your voicemail liberally!*

**What should I do if a program calls me and wants me to tell them where I will be ranking them?**

*Internal medicine programs are not SUPPOSED to contact you to ask you where you will be ranking them. Regardless, it is possible that programs may call you. One approach is to be wary of unrecognized phone numbers, especially from cities that you are interviewing and let them go to voicemail to avoid getting into one of these conversations. If you are contacted by a program by phone or by e-mail obviously fishing for this information, (unless they are definitely your first choice) it is best to tell them that it's been a very difficult decision and that you have not yet finalized your rank list. If a program contacts you asking how you are ranking them, this is a blatant match violation and this should be reported. We ask that you contact your DOM advisor who will help you to figure out how to anonymously report after the match. You should also understand that a program willing to make this kind of blatant violation would be less likely to follow other ACGME policies.*