

Perceptions of the Podiatric Surgical Residency Interview Process

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Statement of Purpose and Literature Review

The podiatric surgical residency interview process might represent a challenging and perhaps stressful time for both student applicants and residency programs. For the students, they have to simultaneously prepare for academic interviews, social interviews, the APMLE Part II board examination, and actively participate in the externship process. For residency programs, a great deal of organization and preparation is required in order to effectively evaluate, analyze and select applicants into a ranked list.

There have been several studies in the literature that have discussed the medical residency interview process, as well as different ways to improve this for both general medical students and residency programs [1-3]. However, there are relatively few publications that have specifically examined the podiatric residency interview process [4-6]. **Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate and better understand fourth year podiatric medical students' perception of the application process for, preparation for, and experience with the CRIP interview process.**

Methodology

An electronic survey was developed and distributed to eligible students from the Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine's (TUSPM) Class of 2018. Participation was voluntary and responses were recorded anonymously. Inclusion criteria for the study were students from the TUSPM Class of 2018 who successfully completed the APMLE Part I and II examinations, participated in CRIP, and matriculated in May 2018. Exclusion criteria were students who did not successfully complete the APMLE Part I or II and/or those who did not graduate.

Based on these criteria, 81 students were eligible for inclusion and invited to participate. The questionnaire consisted of 36 questions (29 multiple choice, 1 multiple/multiple choice, 6 open-response). Descriptive statistics of responses were tabulated and reported herein.

Results

Forty-seven students volunteered to participate for a study response rate of 58.0% (47/81). Representative results are displayed in the accompanying figures and tables.

With respect to structural aspects of the residency interview, 46.8% of students reported that they applied to a range of 5-10 programs, with 19.1% actually completing 9 interviews. 87.2% of students reported that most of their interviews were between 15-30 minutes in duration. 74.5% felt that this was an adequate length of time to be gauged as an applicant.

With respect to perception of preparation for the residency interview, 57.4% of students felt that they were adequately prepared. Out of several main subject areas that we have found to frequently be a part of the interview, 34% of students each reported feeling **most prepared** for both diabetic foot infections and podiatric traumatology. Conversely, 42.6% of students felt that they were **least prepared** for biomechanics. 53.2% of students felt that a combination of rapid fire questions and case work-ups was the interview style that provided the best indication of their knowledge. 83% of students reported that their interviews were a mix of academic and social questions.

About half of students (48.9%) reported feeling confident that they would match with at least one program by the end of interviews, although 31.9% of students reported feeling "misled" by at least one program at some point during the interview process. 57.4% reported that at least one program attempted to apply inappropriate pressure to them at some point during the process. Only about half of students (51.1%) reported that specific residency websites and the CASPR pages represented an accurate representation of programs.

A small majority of students (59.6%) reported being "satisfied" with the process, although a higher percentage (74.5%) reported that it was what they expected. And although most students (66%) reported that a centralized location such as Frisco, TX represented an "ideal" localization for interviews to take place, 74.5% reported that this presented a personal financial strain on them.

Students reported that the top three program attributes that they looked for when considering their rankings were 1) the quantity and diversity of the surgical case load, 2) the culture of the residency program and its reputation, and 3) the quantity and diversity of the faculty. They also felt that the most important attributes that programs should look for in students were 1) work ethic, 2) ability to work well with others, and 3) personality and academic knowledge. 72.3% of students felt that their performance during the externship process was their greatest asset during the process.

Multiple choice question	Most frequent response
To how many total programs did you apply?	46.8% replied a range from 5-10
How many interviews did you actually complete?	19.1% completed 9 interviews
How many programs that you applied to did you also extern at?	40.4% applied to 5+ additional programs
Did you pay the additional fee for scheduling 18+ programs?	93.6% replied no
Because of your perception of your GPA, did you feel the need to apply to more programs?	72.3% replied no
On average, how long were your individual interviews?	87.2% replied a range between 15-30 minutes
Do you feel that interviews were long enough to properly gauge you as an applicant?	74.5% replied yes
What would you consider to be an "ideal" residency interview setting?	66% replied a centralized location such as Frisco, TX
If there was not a centralized interview process, would you have applied to as many programs?	66% reported that they would have applied to less programs
Did interviews present a personal financial strain?	74.5% strongly agreed or agreed
Did you feel confident in your top program choice after interviews?	51.5% reported that they were confident in their top choice
Were you confident that you secured any program by the end of interviews?	48.9% reported that they were confident
Did your opinion of any program change because of their interview?	63.8% replied yes
Did you find that specific residency websites and/or CASPR pages were accurate with respect to programs?	51.1% replied yes
Did you feel that any program misled you at any point?	68.1% replied no
Did you feel that any residency program attempted to apply inappropriate pressure to you during the interview process?	57.4% replied yes
Overall were you satisfied with the residency interview process?	59.6% reported being satisfied
Was the interview process what you expected?	74.5% replied yes
Which interview style did you perceive as the best indicator of your knowledge?	53.2% replied a combination of rapid fire questions and case work-ups
Do you think that adding a surgical skills portion to the interview would be beneficial for you?	27.7% were undecided and 27.7% disagreed
What did you perceive that residency programs valued most in applicants during the interview process?	59.6% reported externship performance
What subjects did you feel most prepared for?	34% each reported podiatric traumatology and diabetic foot infections
What subject were you least prepared for?	42.6% reported biomechanics
How would you describe most of your interviews?	83% reported a mix of academic and social questions
Do you believe that programs that interview after CRIP are at a disadvantage?	55.3% replied yes

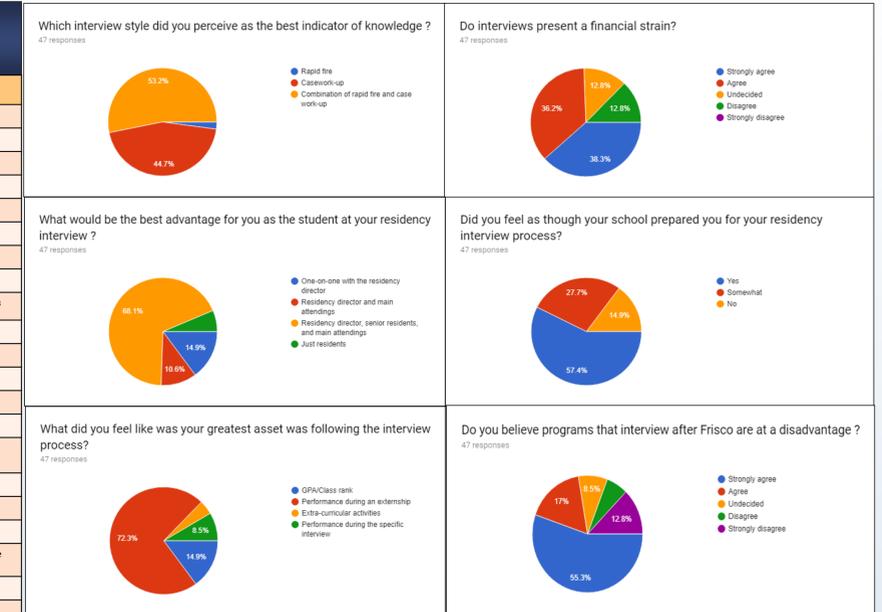
Discussion

Limitations of this study are certainly that it represents a relatively small cross-sectional analysis with a survey design, but might provide some interesting trends for subsequent analysis by our profession's national bodies.

First, although students generally reported that they were satisfied with the process and that it met expectations, perhaps there is more that can be done to alleviate financial constraints on students throughout this process. This might be something as simple as organizing collaborative ride shares/shuttles to and from the airport. It was also interesting that most students felt that programs which conducted interviews after CRIP were at a disadvantage.

Second, only about half of students reported CASPR pages and residency websites accurately represented programs, 57.4% of students reported feeling inappropriate pressure by residency programs, and 31.9% of students reported feeling misled during some of the process. This does not speak too highly of the overall culture of our profession with respect to this process.

In conclusion, the results of this investigation provide some introductory data on podiatric medical student perception of the residency interview process, and might provide some interesting avenues for future investigations to enhance the process for both students and residency programs.



Top 3 Responses for Open-Ended Questions (in order):

What do applicants look for in a program?
-Surgical caseload (quantity/diversity)
-Culture of the program and its reputation (how residents/attendings interact, general environment)
-Quality and diversity of attendings (and willingness to teach residents)

Timing of APMLE Part II and Interviews

-51% did not see a need for a change
-47% of students believed that there needs to be a change for the system
-2% without an opinion

What is the Ideal Residency Interview Setting?

-49% of people opted for a small group interview of attendings and residents
-40% of people opted for one-on-one interviews
-10% of people were indifferent

What Attributes Should Programs Look For in a Candidate?

-Work ethic
-Ability to work well with others
-Personality & academic knowledge

What Would You Change About the Residency Interview Process?

-No change to the application process.
-All programs should be forced to go to CRIP
-Allow APMLE Part II to be taken much earlier than the interview season.

References

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