

State of the Match

Friday, July 12, 2013

With 29,171 positions and 34,355 active applicants, the 2013 Main Residency Match was the largest on record, according to the National Resident Matching Program® (NRMP®). The number of positions in the Match increased by 2,399 over the 2012 Match, with much of the growth attributed to the new “all-in” policy requiring programs to include either all or none of their positions in the Match. Significant increases in positions occurred in internal medicine, family medicine, and psychiatry, likely due to the all-in policy.

Increasing applicants, increasing competition

But along with growth in the number of positions available came growth in the number of applicants. This year’s Match included 17,487 U.S. M.D. seniors, 960 more over 2012, due to new medical schools graduating their first classes as well as established schools increasing enrollment and creating new campuses. Increases also occurred with other applicant types: 2,677 U.S. D.O. students (317 more over 2012) and 12,663 international medical graduates (1,556 more over 2012).

Successfully matching at a rate of 93.7 percent were 16,390 U.S. M.D. seniors, with 78.8 percent matching into one of their top three choices and more than 52 percent matching to their first choice. The match rate decreased for U.S. M.D. seniors from its 2012 high of 95.1 percent, but remained within its historical range of 92–94 percent over the last 30 years.

SOAP® results

In a post-Match press release, NRMP Executive Director Mona M. Signer said, “We are very pleased with the 2013 Match results for medical school applicants and their residency programs.” After the NRMP matching algorithm was processed, only 1,041 positions were unfilled, and 939 were placed in the Match Week Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program® (SOAP) — the process used by NRMP for unfilled residency positions.

A total 2,076 U.S. M.D. seniors were eligible to compete for positions in SOAP because they were either completely or partially unmatched (i.e., matched to a preliminary position but not an advanced position, or matched to an advanced position but not a preliminary one). Of the 980 U.S. M.D. seniors completely unmatched, 452 obtained positions through SOAP, leaving 528 (266 more over 2012) with no position. There are multiple reasons applicants don’t match including overestimating their qualifications and applying only to very competitive specialties. Applicants who apply to and rank only programs in more competitive specialties, may be in danger of not matching.

Ensuring success in the Match

Working with an advisor through the specialty and residency selection process is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure success in the Match. Your advisor can assist you in evaluating

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how competitive you are for the specialty(ies) you're considering and assist you in formulating a parallel plan for this increasingly competitive residency application and match process.

Specialties vary in their competitiveness, and the list of most competitive specialties has remained consistent over the last several years. The most competitive specialties in the 2013 Match included plastic surgery, otolaryngology, neurological surgery, orthopedic surgery, and the combined specialty of psychiatry-family medicine, all filling more than 90 percent of positions with U.S. M.D. seniors. Even in specialties considered less competitive, some programs are highly competitive. So seek advice and review the NRMP's program results from the 2013 Main Residency Match to help you position yourself with a mix of programs to help you successfully match.