

Teaching, Interviewing, and Recruitment in the Time of COVID-19

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*J*ournal of Graduate Medical Education (JGME) readers are well aware of the upheaval in residency and fellowship recruitment this year. Away clinical rotations for visiting students must be limited to those who desire experiences in disciplines without existing residency programs at their home institution—and may occur rarely even in those situations. The USMLE Step 2 CS is deferred. Interviews for positions are virtual. Thus, information available to applicants and programs prior to their ranking decisions will be different from other years. In response to this sudden transformation, JGME editors have identified articles and authors with prior expertise in the virtual world, in order to assist programs in navigating the changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some experts view this period as an opportunity to test new processes that may eventually yield a less expensive, less stressful, and perhaps more equitable application experience for students. Others worry that even more applications will bombard programs this fall, with inadequate information to inform program decisions regarding which applicants will be a good “fit” and successful in the program. The concept of fit itself is increasingly problematic as it can incorporate implicit bias into selection at a time when increasing diversity and implementing anti-racism practices are crucial. We hope that these COVID-19 inspired changes may generate studies that can inform decisions for the next recruitment cycle in 2021 and beyond.

Two articles in this issue focus specifically on preparing programs for the recruitment season. “Reimagining Residency Selection: Part 1—A Practical Guide to Recruitment of the Post-COVID-19 Era,” by Haas and colleagues,¹ discusses social media, website, and other digital options for programs to provide not only accurate details about their program, but also virtual experiences that may simulate student away rotations. The second article in this series, “Reimagining Residency Selection: Part 2—A Practical Guide to Interviewing in the Post-COVID-

19 Era,”² by Sternberg and colleagues, focuses on approaches to the interview day. Two additional articles—Bernstein and colleagues’ “Graduate Medical Education Virtual Interviews and Recruitment in the Era of COVID-19”³ and Ashrafzadeh and Nambudiri’s “Fostering Certainty in an Uncertain Era of Virtual Residency Interviews”⁴—provide practical tips and menus of options to facilitate residency programs’ digital transformations this fall. Another highly readable article, “Videoconferencing: A Steep Learning Curve for Medical Educators”⁵ by Smeraglio and colleagues, offers concrete advice for videoconferencing in general for educators who are novices in this area, with overlap application to video interviews. We strongly recommend programs read these useful articles as they plan for the 2020–2021 recruitment season.

Program directors who have been immersed in adapting to graduate medical education during the pandemic are not alone in feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of resident and fellow recruitment and selection this fall. Yet, a COVID-19 silver lining may be that changes necessitated by the pandemic can allow program directors to address nagging gaps or outdated processes, and potentially streamline procedures while improving outcomes. Articles in this issue of JGME provide guidance and inspiration to educators navigating the digital world; we invite future pieces that study the sweeping changes that are inevitable this year.

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