

One Program's Experience With the Use of Skype for SOAP

We read with interest Edje and colleagues' article in the September 2013 issue of the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* about the use of Skype (Microsoft, Redmond, WA) interviews for residency recruitment, and the suggestion to use Skype during the process of the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP).¹ For our pediatrics residency program, SOAP consisted of a 48-hour block of time to review approximately 600 candidates who applied for a *single*, unfilled slot. Similar to what Edje et al¹ and Shah and colleagues² have described, we use Skype for interviews during SOAP.

Preparation is the key to using Skype for participating in SOAP. Well before Match week, the program must declare its intention to participate in SOAP if the need will arise. A team of individuals knowledgeable about the program must be on standby to forgo other obligations and commit their time to assisting with the process. Our program's 6-member team consisted of the program director, 2 associate program directors, the vice chair of education, the program manager, and a senior resident. The designated institutional official provided oversight. During Match week approximately 120 applications were reviewed within a 28-hour window. Phone and e-mail contact was made with approximately 20 candidates, 13 of whom (65%) were invited to interview via Skype. The 13 candidates were interviewed during an 8-hour period on the Tuesday of Match week, with each interview lasting approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The program director participated in all 13 interviews (100%), and 2 interviews (15%) were conducted solely by the program director. For 3 interviews (23%), program personnel could not see the applicants because of technical difficulties. In all 13 cases (100%), the applicants could see the program representatives. At the conclusion of the process, our program created a SOAP rank list that included all 13 applicants (100%). The unfilled slot was accepted by our No. 1 choice in the first round of SOAP.

Every applicant interviewed via Skype expressed overwhelmingly positive comments about the use of that modality. When asked if they had "Skyped" with other

programs, all responded "no." One applicant modified her response to let us know that after she informed another institution's program that our program was going to interview her via Skype, the other institution then invited her for a Skype interview. Program participants also expressed overwhelmingly positive comments about their experience with the Skype interviews. Our experience has led us to recommend the use of Skype in the SOAP process because it is impractical for applicants to travel and physically visit programs in the brief period available for completing SOAP.

LINDA S. NIELD, MD

Pediatrics Residency Program Director, Professor of Pediatrics, West Virginia University School of Medicine

RENEE B. SAGGIO, MD

Vice Chair of Education, Professor of Pediatrics, West Virginia University School of Medicine

EMILY K. NEASE, MD

Associate Program Director of Pediatrics Residency Program, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, West Virginia University School of Medicine

SANJAY MITRA, MD

Associate Program Director of Pediatrics Residency Program, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, West Virginia University School of Medicine

KELLEY M. GANNON, MD

Chief Resident and Instructor, Department of Internal Medicine, West Virginia University School of Medicine

ERIN N. VANDENLANGENBERG, BS

Pediatrics Residency Program Manager, West Virginia University School of Medicine

NORMAN D. FERRARI III, MD

Former Designated Institutional Official, Vice Dean of Education and Academic Affairs, Professor of Pediatrics, West Virginia University School of Medicine

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