

CHOOSING A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RESIDENCY PROGRAM?

CHAIRMAN AND FACULTY

Training

Interests

Clinical Skills

Teaching Interests

Research Commitment

Balance – Interest and Age

Consider the Chair and the faculty. What kind of training do they have, where did they train, what fellowships did they do, when did they finish training, where else have they worked, and what are their clinical and research skills and interests? Does the Department as a whole show a good balance in age distribution and interests? How do these interests mesh with yours?

HOSPITAL

University

City/County

Private

VA

What kinds of hospitals do residents rotate through, and at what level of training? University hospitals, city or county hospitals, private hospitals, and Veterans' Affairs hospitals have differing patient populations with differing levels of acuity of illness, but they also may function in different ways and the staffs may have varying approaches to patient care. It is preferable to gain a wider breadth of experience during your training, enabling you not only to discover what type of practice you ultimately want for yourself but also to prepare you for whatever situations may you may encounter.

CASES

Number

Types

Cutting edge

How many cases do residents in the program do during their training, and what types of cases? Will you be exposed to the cutting edge of surgical techniques and practice, and will you see and care for the full gamut of surgical pathology? Here again, a wider breadth of experience is preferable.

RESIDENTS

Attitudes

Treatment – day to day

Perception of faculty interest

Opportunities

What are the residents like? What kind of people are they? Are they fulfilled in their work? What do they think of their program, both positives and negatives? How are they treated on a day-to-day basis? What is their perception of the faculty's interest in them? What opportunities do they have for clinical experiences, research time, and fellowships? What do they do for fun? Is the "culture" of the program one that you would find compatible with your own?

PERFORMANCE ON AMERICAN BOARD OF SURGERY

Certifying
Qualifying

How do graduates of the program perform on the American Board of Surgery qualifying and certifying examinations? What kinds of fellowships do they do after completing general surgery training, at what institutions, and with what goals in mind? What proportion of graduates do fellowships, and what proportion go directly into private practice? Although your long-term career plans may change during the course of your residency, as you are exposed to a wider range of experiences than you have had before, you will probably want to choose a program that gives you a good chance to achieve your present goals.

Prestige and tradition can be important, but you can find fabulous opportunities at most places.

FELLOWSHIPS

Types

Places

Reasons

BALANCE

Good variety of cases

Composition of faculty

Opportunities

Fellowships

Compatible culture

Have some fun

PRESTIGE AND TRADITION

IMPORTANT

Fabulous opportunities at most places

WHAT DO PROGRAM DIRECTORS LOOK FOR IN CANDIDATES?

Academic Performance

Personal Qualities

Letters

Personal Statement

Interviewers and Program directors will look at your academic performance, your letters of recommendation, your personal statement, and personal qualities. ERAS requirements are very specific; you should also submit items of interest that distinguish you from other applicants.

ERAS

Fulfill the requirements
Send in interesting items

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Grades – 3.5 or better

USMLE

AOA

Research

This is measured by your grades in medical school and your USMLE scores. Program Directors are also interested in whether you were elected to AOA. If you have done research, and particularly if you have published scholarly papers, it will enhance your application.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Team player
Dedication
Communication skills
Leadership qualities
Compassion
Attitude/Affect
Achievement
Competitiveness

Qualities considered by Program Directors include dedication and compassion. They look at communication skills, leadership qualities, and your attitudes. They want to know about your achievements and competitiveness, whether you are a team player, and whether you will fit into their program.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

From chairman

Faculty members – personal experience

One of your letters should be from the Chair of the Department of Surgery at your medical school, or from a relevant subspecialty chair. You will also want to have recommendations from faculty members who know you personally and can indicate this in their letters.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Why you choose surgery
Interesting experiences
Thoughts about the future

Explain why you have chosen surgery as a career. You may describe interesting experiences, as well as your thoughts about the future.

COMPATIBILITY

Personality and Culture of Program

Your personal philosophy, habits, aspirations
and attitude

THE INTERVIEW

DR. L. D. BRITT

Be honest during your interview and in the materials you submit. Be prepared for the interview, both in terms of knowing something about the program and in being ready to answer questions about yourself and your motivations. Be enthusiastic. Be well dressed. Be on time.

After your interview, make notes about the program, your impressions and what you have learned. Compare your notes with your goals, and use your notes to compare one program with another. When you draw up your match list, be competitive and realistic. Ask yourself whether you will fit in in the places you rank highest.

FINAL ANALYSIS

HOW WILL THE CANDIDATE FIT
INTO OUR PROGRAM?

ADVICE

Be honest

Be prepared

Be enthusiastic

Be well dressed

Be on time

MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

MAKE NOTES ON PROGRAM

COMPARE YOUR NOTES WITH YOUR
GOALS

MATCH LIST - COMPETITIVE & REALISTIC

WOULD I FIT IN