

2016 medical residency programs matching: By the numbers

APR 11, 2016

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The 2016 Match was the largest ever recorded by the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) and resulted in a higher overall match rate than the year prior.

With 42,370 total registrants, this year's Match eclipsed the record set in 2015 by 1,036 registrants, according to 2016 Match data released by the NRMP.

A total of 30,750 positions were available, an increase of 538 positions from 2015, which was another record. Available first-year (PGY-1) positions reached 27,860, a year-over-year increase of 567.

The overall match rate hit 96.2 percent in 2016, with 96.3 percent of first-year positions filled. Both those rates were up from last year.

The number of active U.S. allopathic seniors participating in the Match increased this year by 162, reaching 18,187. And while the percent of U.S. allopathic seniors matching to PGY-1 positions dropped slightly, from 93.9 percent to 93.8 percent, 125 more seniors matched into PGY-1 positions compared to 2015.

Other highlights included:

- **5,323:** New record for participation by U.S. citizens who are seniors/graduates of foreign medical schools. Their match rate went up about 1 percentage point, reaching 53.9 percent for U.S. citizen international medical graduates and 50.5 percent for non-citizen international medical graduates (50.5 percent).
- **53.0 percent:** Percentage of U.S. allopathic seniors who obtained their first choice for training. 79.2 percent obtained one of their top three choices for training.
- **1,046:** Highest-ever number of active couples navigating the Match together.
- **95.7 percent:** Best-ever match rate for couples.
- **2,982:** Most U.S. osteopathic seniors/graduates ever to submit preferences.
- **80.3 percent:** Record-high match rate for U.S. osteopathic seniors/graduates.

The NRMP Match Week Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program® (SOAP®) enables applicants who did not match to apply for unfilled positions. Of 1,178 unfilled positions this year, 1,097 were offered during SOAP.

Physician shortage looms large

Concerns remain that residency training programs may not be able to address the estimated shortage of physicians, which could range from 61,700 to 94,700 over the next decade, according to newly released study findings from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

The study updates a report from 2015, with findings remaining largely consistent. The latest report includes a new section on underserved populations, showing that the physician shortage would be even more severe if barriers to health care were removed and more people in need could access services.

In fact, the country would need up to an additional 96,000 physicians today to meet these needs, the study found.

Advocating for new solutions

The AMA has been calling for expanded graduate medical education (GME) programs and funding for many years.

At the federal level, the AMA recently submitted a letter on key GME reforms to the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, and is pushing for legislation such as the Creating Access to Residency Education (CARE) Act.

At the 2015 AMA Interim Meeting, the AMA also adopted a report on alternative funding mechanisms for GME.

State funding opportunities and working with philanthropic organizations, local hospitals and employers all are among the options the report outlined for programs looking to expand their residency slots.

Going forward, the AMA will continue to explore various models of all-payer funding for GME. It also will encourage insurance payers and foundations to forge partnerships with academic medical centers and other organizations to expand training opportunities.

Other ongoing efforts include the SaveGME campaign to protect federal funding and the AMA's Accelerating Change in Medical Education initiative, which is addressing some of these issues by supporting medical school projects that accelerate student progress through medical school, allowing them to enter residency sooner and contribute more rapidly to expanding the physician workforce.