

Breaking down the numbers behind the Match process

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Brendan Murphy

News Writer

Once you have submitted your Match rankings in advance of the Feb. 21 deadline, there is not much to do but wait. That idle time should not be spent worrying, however.

The reality is that you are probably going to match. According to data published by the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP), 94.3 percent of U.S. allopathic medical school seniors matched to postgraduate year one (PGY-1) positions in 2017.

A deeper dive into the NRMP data on the 2017 Match sheds further light on the reality underlying the process that is pivotal to helping most students' medical career dreams come true.

Size, scope of the 2017 Match. The 2017 Main Residency Match was the largest in terms of the number of all positions offered (31,757) and filled (30,478). The number of PGY-1 positions offered (28,849) was an all-time high, up nearly 1,000 over 2016. Last year also marked the 15th consecutive year during which the number of positions available to applicants increased.

The matter of choice. While less than half of U.S. seniors wound up matching with the program they ranked as their top choice (48.4 percent), roughly three-quarters (74.4 percent) of them matched with a program ranked in their top three.

IMGs' PGY-1 match rate on the rise. There was a slight dip in the number of graduates of international medical schools (IMGs) who applied for U.S.-based residency programs in 2017. That said, they fared better in the Match process than in years past. Of the 7,149 U.S. citizen IMGs who registered for the Match, 5,069 submitted rank order lists of programs, 254 fewer than the prior year.

Still, that group's PGY-1 match rate of 54.8 percent was the highest since 2004. Likewise, the number of non-U.S. citizen IMGs submitting rank order lists was 176 fewer than last year; however, their 52.4 percent PGY-1 match rate was the highest since 2005.

Couples matching at a high rate. The NRMP gives couples the opportunity to form pairs of choices on their rank list, which are considered in rank order when the Match is processed. The 1,125 couples

who participated in the match in 2017 were the most ever. Those couples matched at a 95.4 percent rate.

Match participation increases among DOs. With the transition to a single accreditation system, the number of osteopathic medical school graduates participating in the Match continues to grow. A record-high 3,590 DO candidates submitted rank order list, resulting in an 81.7 percent PGY-1 match rate (also an all-time high). Over the past five years, Match participation among such applicants is up 34.1 percent.

Specialty-specific Match data

- | A total of 6,607 U.S. medical students matched to categorical positions in the primary care specialties of family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics, representing 37.8 percent of all U.S. seniors who matched to PGY-1 positions.
- | Obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine and psychiatry all offered record-high numbers of positions and all had fill rates higher than 99 percent when the matching algorithm was processed.

What if you don't match

Once the initial matching algorithm was processed last spring, 1,279 of the 31,757 positions were unfilled. Of those unfilled spots, 1,177 were placed in the Match Week Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP). At the conclusion of SOAP, all but 101 positions had been filled. It is also worth noting that even after SOAP concludes, you have other options.