

The Match process is packed with stress. Ob-gyns aim to fix it.

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Between 2010 and 2019, the average number of applications submitted by medical students who want to match into ob-gyn residency programs has more than doubled, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

An ambitious project proposed by residency programs within the specialty aims to simplify the Match process by reducing applications and creating a more equitable interview invitation system. Spearheaded by the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) and the Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology (CREOG), the program has received a \$50,000 planning grant from the AMA Reimagining Residency Initiative.

The APGO program—dubbed Right Resident, Right Program, Ready Day One—is one of three programs to receive planning grants from the AMA. In total, the AMA Reimagining Residency Initiative awarded \$15 million in grants to institutions who will aim to transform residency training to meet the workforce needs of America's current and future health care system.

Application overload

With the increasing number of applications submitted by each student, the process of securing a residency position has become more stressful. Final-year students spend a significant amount of time and money on the application process.

In the 2018–19 application cycle, students applying to ob-gyn programs submitted an average of 61.3 applications. Programs have seen a remarkable rise in the volume of applications. That number has grown from an average of 155 applications per program in 2010 to 438 in 2019, according to AAMC data.

That volume has created an environment in which program directors have less bandwidth to consider applicants holistically, defaulting to an evaluation process that overemphasizes test scores and increases stress in applicants.

“There’s been a lot of writing in the literature recently about how this process needs to change,” said Maya Hammoud, MD, president of APGO and a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Michigan Medicine. “With support from the AMA, we have started a five-year process by taking small steps to make sure we have all the stakeholders on board. At the same time, we are implementing small changes now to reduce anxiety among students. But this will not be an overnight process. It took many years to get to this point; it will take many years to get out of it.”

A standardized approach

To get the project off the ground in its early stages, the project’s leaders are making sure to get buy-in from key stakeholders such as medical school deans, clerkship directors, residency program directors and representatives from the National Resident Matching Program.

A significant number of ob-gyn residency programs have already adopted suggested interventions that will standardize the residency application process. The three biggest changes are:

- Setting a final ob-gyn application deadline of Oct. 1.
- Limiting interview invitations to the number of interview slots available within a program and allowing applicants a minimum of 72 hours after an interview invitation email to respond.
- Informing applicants of their final status—such as invited for interview; waitlisted; or rejected, if the applicant was not offered an interview by Nov. 22.

APGO has laid out longer-term goals for its efforts to reduce the stress involved with Match. These include development of additional application review metrics to encourage a holistic review of residency applications, an applicant compatibility index to help students with program selection, and an optional early match program within the specialty intended to reduce the number of applications needed for a successful Match.