

## Choosing a medical specialty

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### How to choose a medical specialty

Explore The FREIDA's Specialty Guide for highlights on specialties/subspecialties, Match data and career statistics.

One of the most important decisions you will make during medical school is which specialty to choose. Many factors go into this decision, including your personal history, your clinical interests, your experience during rotations, the duration of the training involved and financial and lifestyle considerations.

While all of these considerations are important, how they rank as decision-making criteria will ultimately depend on you. Some students know what specialty they will choose before medical school, while others will decide after completing a rotation they feel passionate about. Still others change their minds several times before finding the right fit.

Follow these steps to choose a specialty, and learn what needs to be done during medical school to enter the training program of your choice.

### Narrowing your options

One early decision to make when deciding on a specialty is the choice between surgical and non-surgical specialties. You can narrow your other options further once you have made this distinction. Actual clinical rotation experience is crucial in providing an opportunity to see first-hand what day-to-day life is like in that specialty. Remember to keep an open mind and to be objective during this process, and examine all aspects before reaching a final decision.

The FREIDA's Specialty Guide presents a clear, approachable overview of specialties and subspecialties and can assist you in choosing a career path. It's designed to simplify medical students' specialty selection process, highlight major specialties, detail training information and provide access to related association information.

This resource contains detailed snapshots of the 40 most common medical specialties and subspecialties. Information includes professional profiles and match data and summaries from

specialty associations. These summaries describe the skills required to succeed in the specialty, interactions with common types of patients, work-life balance and specialty and fellowship training.

Inside the guide book you can also access specialty training and graduate career planning statistics from FREIDA Online®, the AMA Residency & Fellowship Database™ comprising more than 10,000 graduate medical education programs.

## Guidance from specialty program data

Specialty program data can show the competitiveness of admissions to certain residencies. Statistics, such as the desired USMLE® Step 1 score for an interview, can also help guide studies during medical school.

Gain insight into:

- | How to choose a specialty and when
- | How competitive the admission to each specialty's residency is
- | The residency application timeline
- | The daily challenges faced in each specialty
- | What the residency work environment and compensation are like
- | The additional career paths available
- | Data that provides the number of 1st-year graduate applicants in 2014 by specialty\*

\*Data from 2014 NRMP Main Residency Match

Make sure to research all specialties of interest and begin early, relying on specialty program data for guidance and staying up to date on medical school and residency news.

## Research specialties and begin early

- | Review facts and figures related to work-life balance, such as salary and vacation days.
- | Join special-interest clubs or organizations at school.
- | Contact physicians in specialties of interest and ask to shadow them.
- | Read the "Shadow Me" Specialty Series to see how physicians spend their days and handle the most challenging aspects of patient care.

## AMA member resources

- | FREIDA™, the AMA Residency & Fellowship Database®
- | Health Workforce Mapper