

So you wrapped up the residency interview. Do this next.

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Residency interviews can be a daunting prospect. So too can the uncertainty following them.

What should you do after the interview? The answer is going to differ depending on your individual circumstances. At a recent AMA-member exclusive event, residency program directors and resident physicians offered their insights on the residency interview process and what you should do in the aftermath. A recording of the event is available for AMA members—click to join or renew.

Here's a look at a few key takeaways.

Capture your first response

Immediately following your interview, you should take a few minutes to capture your initial reaction.

“Interviews, after some time, do tend to blend together a little bit, although every program is unique in its own way,” said AMA member Liz Southworth, MD, an ob-gyn PGY-2 at Michigan Medicine. She advises that residency applicants “quickly jot down some thoughts” after the interview’s completed.

Dr. Southworth specifically recommended the National Resident Matching Program’s Prism app, which she said is “nice because it lets you rank programs as you go.”

Bukky Ajagbe Akingbola, DO, a first-year ob-gyn resident at the University of Minnesota, spoke of a colleague who recorded short videos of his impressions following his residency interviews.

“As it came time to rank those programs, he’d have those videos as a resource to rewatch,” she said. “It’s a long interview season and it may be hard to recall how you felt about interview you did in November come January.” Find out more about what not to do during your interactions with program directors.

Heed a program's communication protocol

If a program says they don't respond to post-interview communication, don't worry about following up. If you do follow up and don't hear back, don't read into it.

"If a program says: Please do not contact us afterwards. We are so thankful you interviewed with us, but we do not engage in post-interview communication—just don't," Dr. Akingbola said. "I know that sounds very basic, but sometimes, especially as the interview process goes on, it might be hard to fight that urge. The program I matched at didn't explicitly tell us not to, but they didn't respond to communication. ... If you don't hear anything, know that it is probably OK."

If you do follow up, don't overdo it. It's unlikely to make you stand out in a positive way, according to one program director.

"It almost never makes a difference [in the decision on an applicant] and I certainly don't write it down if someone doesn't send a thank-you note," said Hilary Fairbrother, MD, an AMA member who is the vice chair of education in the emergency medicine department at the University of Texas at Houston. "I have gotten some head shots—I think that's a big strange. I understand you are trying to be remembered, but I interview over 100 people, so it's hard to make a connection."

If it's necessary, Dr. Fairbrother noted, she can call up an applicant's photo on the Electronic Residency Application Service.

Find out which factors applicants weigh most when picking residency programs.