What to know about this year’s physician residency-application cycle

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Brendan Murphy
Senior News Writer

The past three years have brought disruption to the residency-application process. Some of the disruption, born of the pandemic, has led to improvement. Because of that, the process looks much different than it did a few years ago.

What should applicants in the 2022–2023 cycle expect? A recent AMA Innovations in Medical Education webinar answered this question.

Here are some take-home points from the hour-long webinar.

Virtual interviews continue

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has recommended that virtual residency interviews continue in 2022–2023. In its guidance on residency interviews, the AAMC—which also discouraged hybrid interviews—highlighted the equity that virtual interviews offer as a primary driver of the format.

Numerous physician specialties have committed to sticking to a virtual format in the coming cycle, including (as of August 1, 2022) emergency medicine, general surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology, and otolaryngology. Still, the decision is ultimately made at the individual residency program level.

“Even within specialties, there’s no way you can enforce” virtual interview recommendations, said webinar presenter Maya M. Hammoud, MD, MBA, who is professor of obstetrics and gynecology, and of learning health sciences, at the University of Michigan Medical School.
“Unfortunately, we know that some programs will give you the option [to interview in person], but I certainly hope that when programs give you the option, they do mean it. So really, use your judgment on whether or not it’s important for you to visit a program or not when deciding between a virtual interview and an in-person [one].”

Learn with the AMA about tips to help M4s manage the stresses of virtual residency interviews.

### Standardized interview offer dates

At least six specialties are offering standardized interview offer dates, meaning that in those specialties the vast majority of interview offers will go out on predetermined dates. The specialties that will be using standardized interview offer dates include ophthalmology, urology, obstetrics and gynecology, general surgery, dermatology, orthopedic surgery, and otolaryngology.

“The reason to go toward a single interview offer date or predictable offer dates is so that applicants are not hooked up to their phones waiting for that invite to come,” said Dr. Hammoud, who also serves as a consultant to the AMA’s medical education unit.

The standardized interview offer dates don’t necessarily mean that additional interviews will not be offered after the announced standardized date. Rather, the number of interviews offered after the date is expected to be minimal. It’s also important to note that not every program in a given specialty will follow the standardized offer dates. However, medical students should know which programs are participating in advance of the offer date.

When it comes to securing interviews, 18 specialties also will allow for applicant program signaling.

### Additional applicant information

Meanwhile, 16 specialties are using some form of a supplemental application. These are available through the Electronic Residency Application Service and applicants can access them Aug. 1. The supplemental applications close Sept. 16, and applicants must finalize their primary application Sept. 28. The aim of the supplemental application is to share additional information about applicants with programs.

A handful of specialties are using the Altus assessment, a tool aimed at evaluating social intelligence, communication, motivation and other attributes. To take the assessment, applicants must register for a test date at a testing center. Dr. Hammoud recommended that applicants take this as soon as possible. The specialties that are using Altus include internal medicine, general surgery, anesthesia, obstetrics and gynecology and ophthalmology.