ERAS Interview Season Tips from the ERAS Advisory Committee Chairs

Dear Medical School Contact,

As physicians, members of the academic medicine and residency training communities, and Chairs of the AAMC's ERAS Advisory Committee, we know that the residency selection process is a significant turning point on your students' paths to medicine. We appreciate the countless hours, energy, and care you dedicate to guiding students given the increasingly complex and fast-moving nature of the application and interview process.

Many of us whose work relates to the transition to residency are familiar with common counter-productive behaviors practiced by programs and applicants. The ERAS Advisory Committee, along with several others, hopes to raise awareness about and offer suggestions for minimizing these behaviors to reduce stress for everyone throughout the interview process. This afternoon, we will be sending the message below to applicants and programs with recommendations for more effective management of the interview process.

Given the stress of the application and interview process, we value the considerable work you and your colleagues do to minimize counter-productive behavior on the part of applicants, and encourage you to log in to AAMC's Careers in Medicine site for additional resources for advising students on:

- Developing a sound application strategy, which includes identifying reasonable and realistic numbers of programs to apply to and interviews to attend;
- Navigating the interview process, including affirming the importance of courteous, timely, and responsible communication with programs about response and cancellation timelines and deadlines; and
- Demonstrating professionalism and courtesy in scheduling and conducting interviews.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to our next generation of physicians.

Sincerely,
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Dear Program Contacts and Residency Applicants,

Welcome to ERAS 2019! As physicians, members of the academic medicine and residency training communities, and Chairs of the AAMC's ERAS Advisory Committee, we know that the residency selection process is both an exciting and stressful time. We appreciate the countless hours and the deep commitment you have devoted to get you to this point in the application process, whether as a student preparing to apply to programs, or as a training program anticipating the matching of this year's new residents.

Because interview time is such a busy period for applicants, schools, and programs alike, the ERAS Advisory Committee is working to help raise awareness about and offer suggestions for addressing some behaviors that have an impact on the interview process. Below, we have identified some of the most commonly reported counter-productive behaviors of both programs and students. Recognizing the pressures that both groups feel heading into the application and interview season, these behaviors, while understandable, ultimately create more stress for everyone involved. To help minimize that added stress, we have provided our recommendations, based on experience in the field, for programs and applicants to best manage the competitive, intense, and fast-moving nature of the interview season.

Programs:

Counter-productive behaviors

- Overbooking – offering more interviews than time slots available on a first come, first serve basis, which results in applicants missing classes or rotations or constantly checking email to monitor interview invitations (or asking family and friends to do so)—and accepting all interview invitations or accepting them haphazardly out of anxiety about not matching
- Not updating program requirements either in ERAS or on program websites, or not publishing requirements at all, which can lead to an increase in application volume, including unqualified applicants
- Not publishing interview timelines and policies on program websites and/or through ERAS (e.g., setting expectations regarding whether applicants must respond immediately when offered an interview)

Recommendations

- Inform applicants about your timeline and policies for sending invitations and conducting interviews. This can be done through [ERAS Account Maintenance](#), by entering the information in the *Program Listing tab*, and/or by posting this information on your program's website

- Limit the invitations sent to the number of interview slots, and provide applicants with a designated period of time to respond before offering interviews to other candidates. If you do choose to offer more invitations than interview opportunities, clearly explain your policy and your approach for how interviews are scheduled
- Communicate with applicants if your interview schedule is full, and indicate if your program waitlists qualified applicants who cannot yet be scheduled for an interview. Explain the process for filling interview opportunities that subsequently become open
- Post and communicate your deadlines for interview cancellations
- Notify the medical school dean's office if an applicant cancels at the last minute or does not show up for an interview

The AAMC offers a [best practice interview guide](#) that provides ideas for conducting effective interviews.

Applicants:

Counter-productive behaviors

- Applying to and accepting interviews with programs in which they are not genuinely interested "just in case," even if it is unlikely to increase the chance of matching or creates conflicts with other interviews or an unrealistically packed interview schedule
- Canceling a scheduled interview too late for other applicants to take advantage of the opening. While canceling an interview at the last minute may seem inconsequential, it can deny other applicants the opportunity to interview at a program of interest, puts waitlisted applicants in the position of having to incur last minute travel expenses, and is discourteous to and wastes the time of residency program staff

Recommendations

- Work with your advisor(s) to craft a sound, comprehensive application and interview strategy. This will help you set priorities and make decisions about which interview invitations to accept.
  - Seek informed counsel from your advisor(s) regarding the specific programs, and the number of programs, to which you should apply
  - Determine the maximum number of residency interviews you can reasonably attend and prioritize them by program. Either don't accept additional interviews or promptly cancel any interview that exceeds that maximum or ranks lower on your priority list.
- Confirm and adhere to each program's interview response and cancellation deadlines, and practice professional courtesy in providing a timely response to all requests unless exceptional circumstances arise
- Should you need to cancel an interview, communicate with programs as soon as possible, out of respect for the residency program and other applicants

Additionally, the AAMC offers a number of resources to help you [apply smart](#) and plan for the [residency interview process](#).

The AAMC is committed to improving the [transition to residency](#) by providing better information and additional tools to support applicants, advisors, and program directors. We continue to engage all stakeholders involved as we discuss and develop these resources.

Once again, thank you for your hard work and dedication to our profession. Best wishes for a productive interview season!

Sincerely,

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