

EDUCATION

Attributes of successfully matched versus unmatched obstetrics and gynecology fellowship applicants

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OBJECTIVE: We sought to determine the attributes of successful and unsuccessful fellowship applicants of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology Inc (ABOG)-approved fellowship programs and to identify salient differences between subspecialty applicants.

STUDY DESIGN: Anonymous questionnaires were completed by obstetrics and gynecology fellowship applicants using a web-based survey after match day of 2012. Fellowship applicant practices were evaluated and included importance of prematch preparations, interview process, networking practices, and postmatch reflections.

RESULTS: A total of 327 fellowship applicants applying to programs accredited by the ABOG were surveyed, and 200 completed the survey (61% response rate). A comparison between prematch educational preparations pursued by applicants showed that matched applicants were more likely to come from allopathic medical schools (94%), attain membership in Alpha Omega Alpha and/or Phi Beta Kappa (27%), and

receive a letter of recommendation from a nationally known subspecialist (77%) than unmatched applicants ($P = .03$, $.005$, and $.007$, respectively). Applicants to reproductive endocrinology and infertility were more likely than female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery to be members of academic honor societies ($P = .008$). Research publication was common among matched subspecialist applicants, with over half publishing 1-3 peer-reviewed manuscripts prior to matching. Applicants to gynecologic oncology did more visiting electives than any other specialty applicants ($P < .001$).

CONCLUSION: Successful obstetrics and gynecology fellowship applicants have superior prematch preparations, strong letters of recommendation from leaders in their field of interest, and multiple research publications. These data will guide applicants to a critical self-analysis before deciding to apply.

Key words: attributes, fellowship applicants, subspecialty

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The obstetrics and gynecology subspecialties of female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (FPMRS), gynecologic oncology, maternal-fetal medicine (MFM), and reproductive endocrinology and infertility (REI) proved competitive for the 2013 appointment year, with 94% of programs filling offered positions, and 31% of applicants going unmatched. A total of 196 active obstetrics and gynecology fellowship programs had 240 positions available.

Of a total of 327 active applicants, 226 filled these positions, leaving a total of 14 positions unfilled. By subspecialty, all 46 available positions in gynecologic oncology filled, with 46 (61%) of 75 applicants matching. Eighty-nine of 98 positions filled in MFM, with 88 (72%) of 123 applicants matching. Regarding REI, 43 of 45 positions filled, with 43 (67%) of 64 applicants matching. Lastly, 48 of 51 positions filled for FPMRS, with 48 (74%) of 65 applicants

matching.¹ The competitive nature of the obstetrics and gynecology subspecialty match over the last few years compels us to consider the attributes that would qualify a particular applicant to obtain an interview and, ultimately, match into these programs. While previous studies on fellowships for subspecialties such as pediatric general surgery have recognized the considerable preparation required for applicants, the specific prerequisites for obtaining an interview in a competitive subspecialty are unknown.² Some progress has been made in the field of obstetrics and gynecology with regard to desirable attributes of applicants; however, the study was undertaken from the perspective of fellowship directors, not the applicants themselves.³ In addition, with the exception of some online resources available to prospective applicants, information on the fellowship match remains scant, and several areas remain unexplored, for instance, applicant demographics as well as the number of publications and interviews needed for a successful match.

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TABLE 1

Subspecialty fellowship applicant attributes: characteristics of all obstetrics and gynecology subspecialty applicant respondents

Characteristic	Overall	FPMRS	GO	MFM	REI	P value
Overall	200	41 (21%)	58 (29%)	60 (30%)	41 (21%)	
Age, y (n = 198)						
<30	72 (36)	17 (42)	23 (40)	15 (25)	17 (44)	—
30-32	77 (39)	10 (24)	24 (41)	28 (47)	15 (39)	
33-35	29 (15)	8 (20)	11 (19)	5 (8)	5 (13)	
36-38	15 (8)	3 (7)	0 (0)	11 (18)	1 (3)	
≥39	5 (3)	3 (7)	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (3)	
Sex (n = 196)						
Male	57 (29)	12 (29)	19 (33)	13 (22)	13 (33)	.52
Female	139 (71)	29 (71)	38 (67)	46 (78)	26 (67)	
Race (n = 190)						
White	137 (72)	25 (63)	42 (75)	39 (71)	31 (80)	—
Black	12 (6)	3 (8)	3 (5)	4 (7)	2 (5)	
Asian	29 (15)	9 (23)	8 (14)	8 (15)	4 (10)	
Multiple/other	12 (6)	3 (8)	3 (5)	4 (7)	2 (5)	
Type of medical school (n = 194)						
Allopathic medical school	177 (91)	34 (83)	56 (98)	51 (90)	36 (92)	—
Osteopathic medical school	17 (9)	7 (17)	1 (2)	6 (11)	3 (8)	
Did you match? (n = 198)						
Yes	148 (75)	29 (71)	41 (71)	48 (80)	30 (77)	.61
No	50 (25)	12 (29)	17 (29)	12 (20)	9 (23)	
Rank at matched program (n = 126)						
First	66 (52)	11 (42)	17 (49)	24 (62)	14 (54)	—
Second	21 (17)	9 (35)	6 (17)	2 (5)	4 (15)	
Third	13 (10)	1 (4)	4 (11)	5 (13)	3 (12)	
Fourth	13 (10)	3 (12)	3 (9)	5 (13)	2 (8)	
≥Fifth	13 (10)	2 (8)	5 (14)	3 (8)	3 (12)	
Member of Alpha Omega Alpha or Phi Beta Kappa (n = 183)						
Yes	40 (22)	4 (10)	14 (25)	9 (17)	13 (36)	.04
No	143 (78)	35 (90)	42 (75)	43 (83)	23 (64)	
CREOG score >230 (n = 184)						
Yes	57 (31)	10 (26)	21 (38)	15 (29)	11 (31)	.74
No	91 (50)	20 (51)	26 (46)	29 (56)	16 (44)	
Do not know	35 (19)	9 (23)	9 (16)	8 (15)	9 (25)	
Did visiting elective prior to match (n = 181)						
Yes	59 (33)	8 (21)	33 (60)	9 (17)	9 (26)	< .001
No	122 (67)	31 (80)	22 (40)	43 (83)	26 (74)	

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(continued)

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