

2450 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20037-1127

www.nrmp.org E-Mail: nrmp@aamc.org

Toll Free: 1-866-617-5838 Phone: (202) 828-0566

Fax: (202) 828-4797

Contact: Lesley Ward
202-828-0655
lward@aamc.org

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Highest Match Rate for U.S. Medical School Seniors in 30 Years *SOAP Replaces the Scramble*

Washington, D.C., March 16, 2012—More than 95 percent of U.S. medical school seniors—the highest rate in 30 years—have matched to residency positions according to new data released today by the National Resident Matching Program[®] (NRMP[®]). These individuals make up the nearly 16,000 U.S. medical students who learn today in Match Day celebrations across the country where they will spend the next three to seven years in residency training.

The number of applicants in this year's Main Residency Match^(SM) rose by 642 for a total of 38,377 participants, an increase of more than 2,400 over the last five years. These individuals applied for 26,772 positions, an increase of 614 over 2011. This total includes 146 positions in child neurology, which joined the Match this year. Internal medicine, anesthesiology, and emergency medicine saw the largest increases in 2012, and emergency medicine filled every available position. The number of family medicine positions increased only slightly (1.1 percent) following notable increases over the last two years.

U.S. medical school seniors made up 15,712 of the 22,934 applicants who were successfully matched to first-year residency positions. Although the number of seniors matched to positions increased, the number of participating seniors declined slightly, down by 32. However, the total number of matched U.S. M.D.'s, which includes previous graduates, increased by 84 to a new high of 16,272. The number of matched U.S. citizens who attended international medical schools continued to rise, increasing by 218 over 2011 and by more than 500 over five years. After declining for two years in a row, the number of non-U.S. citizens matched to positions rose by nearly 2 percent.

For individuals who were not matched to a residency position, the NRMP debuted the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program^(SM) (SOAP^(SM)), a new process developed in partnership with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and in consultation with student affairs deans, residency program directors, resident physicians, and medical students. Designed to help streamline, equalize, and automate the process for students who are not matched initially, SOAP replaces the "Scramble," the unofficial name for the period of time during Match Week when unmatched applicants contact programs with unfilled positions. Under SOAP, the NRMP makes available the locations of unfilled positions so that unmatched students can submit applications for these positions through the AAMC's Electronic Residency Application Service^(®) (ERAS^(®)). After receiving applications through ERAS, residency program directors create a list of candidates in order of preference and the NRMP offers positions in that order in a series of up to eight rounds. Applicants are able to receive multiple offers in a single round; if an offer is accepted, it is binding.

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This year, 1,246 residency positions were available after applicants who matched were notified. During SOAP, programs offered 1,131 of those positions and only 152 remained available at the conclusion of three offer rounds.

“The 2012 Match has been overwhelmingly successful due to strong participation by applicants and teaching hospitals and the launch of the Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program. The development of SOAP exhibits the dedication of the medical education community to improving the Match process for all applicants, program directors, and medical school advisers. There is great cause for celebration across the nation’s medical schools today,” said Mona M. Signer, executive director of the NRMP.

Participants

NRMP reported that in addition to students from U.S. medical schools, other participants in the 2012 Match included:

- 2,360 students and graduates of osteopathic (D.O. degree-granting) schools—an increase of 182 over 2011 and up almost 500 over five years.
- 4,279 U.S. citizens from international medical schools—510 more individuals over 2011 and up more than 1,300 over five years.
- 6,828 non-U.S. citizens/graduates of international medical schools—169 more individuals over 2011.

Match Rate

Of the applicants who matched, 81.6 percent of U.S. seniors and 81.5 percent of independent applicants matched to one of their top three choices. More than 56 percent of U.S. seniors and approximately 49 percent of independent applicants matched to their first choice.

Specialty Trends

Match results can be an indicator of career interests among U.S. medical school seniors. Among the notable trends this year:

- Dermatology, orthopaedic surgery, otolaryngology, plastic surgery, radiation oncology, thoracic surgery, and vascular surgery were the most competitive fields for applicants.
- Emergency medicine programs offered 61 more positions and filled all 1,668 available positions.
- Anesthesiology programs offered 78 more positions, and U.S. seniors filled 725 of the 919 positions offered.

Couples in the Match

This year, the Match included 878 couples, an all-time high. Participants who enter the Match as a [couple](#) agree to have their rank order lists of preferred residency programs linked to each other to

ensure that they match to programs within the same geographic area, for instance. This year, 804 couples matched to their respective residency program preferences. A couple is any two applicants—regardless of the nature of their relationship—who participate in the Match as partners.

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How the Match Works

Conducted annually by the NRMP, the Match uses a [computerized mathematical algorithm](#) to align the preferences of applicants with the preferences of residency program directors to fill the training positions available at U.S. teaching hospitals.

For more information, visit www.nrmp.org after 1:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, March 16.

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The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) is a private, not-for-profit organization established in 1952 at the request of medical students to provide an orderly and fair mechanism to match the preferences of applicants to U.S. residency positions with the preferences of residency program directors for those applicants.