

Applicant Cost for Residency Match in Neurological Surgery

Nitin Agarwal MD; Phillip Choi; David O. Okonkwo MD, PhD; Daniel L. Barrow MD; Robert M. Friedlander MD
 Department of Neurological Surgery, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA
 Department of Neurosurgery, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

Introduction

Application for a residency position in neurosurgery is a highly competitive process. However, the process is an expensive one that places significant financial burden on applicants. In this study, we aimed to quantify expenses incurred by first year neurosurgery residents who matched in 2014.

Methods

A ten question survey was distributed in partnership with the Society of Neurological Surgeons to all first year neurosurgery residents in the United States. The survey asked respondents about the number of sub-internships, interviews, and second looks attended and the resultant costs, the type of program match, preferences for sub-internship interviews, and suggestions for changes they would like to see in the application process. In addition to compiling overall results, we examined the data for differences in cost when stratifying for region of the respondent's medical school or whether the respondent had contact with the program they matched to prior to the interview process (matched to home or sub-internship program).

Summary of Overall Survey Results		
Attended medical school with residency program, %	75.4%	
Number of sub-internships completed, median (IQR)	3 (2-3)	
Number of interviews attended, mean ± SD	15.3 ± 5.4	
Number of second looks attended, median (IQR)	1 (0-2)	
Cost of sub-internships, mean ± SD (% of total expense)	\$2,835 ± \$2,363 (28.3%)	
Cost of interviews, mean ± SD (% of total expense)	\$7182 ± \$3880 (69.5%)	
Cost of second looks, mean ± SD (% of total expense)	\$293 ± \$450 (2.8%)	
Total cost, mean ± SD	\$10,255 ± \$5,168	
Matched into	Home	17.7%
	Sub-internship	21.5%
	Second look	13.9%
	Other	36.9%
	No response	10.0%
Preference for sub-internship interviews	During sub-internship	33.1%
	During formal interview process	50.0%
	No response	16.9%

Results

The survey had a 64.4% response rate. The mean total expenses for all components of the application process were \$10,255 with interview costs comprising the majority of the expenses (69.5%). No difference in number of sub-internships, interviews, or second looks attended, or their individual and total costs, were seen for applicants from different regions of the United States. Respondents who matched to their home or sub-internship program attended fewer interviews (13.5 versus 16.4, $p = 0.0023$) but had the same overall costs (mean \$9,774 versus \$10,566, $p = 0.58$).

Conclusions

Securing a residency position in neurosurgery is a costly process for applicants. No differences are seen when stratifying by region of medical school attended or contact with a program prior to interviewing. Interview costs comprise the majority of expenses for applicants, and changes to the application process are needed to control costs incurred by applicants.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, participants should be able to:

- 1) Describe the importance of the costs associated with applying for the residency match in Neurological Surgery