

# **APPLICATION TO UROLOGY RESIDENCY**

Recommendations for  
Northwestern University  
Feinberg School of Medicine  
Medical Students

This outline is intended to serve as a guide for you in your application process to Urology residency programs. You will also find that advice from attending urologists and Urology residents will be valuable in helping you make decisions.

## **SELECTION OF UROLOGY AS A CAREER**

Choice of a career is governed by an individual's preferences, goals, and abilities. This guide makes no attempt to help you decide which field is "right for you." However, elective clerkships and faculty advisors may help you with this decision. If uncertain, you should discuss your career intentions with a faculty advisor in the disciplines you are considering. It is helpful to obtain this advice in the Spring Quarter (April-May) of your third year. Dr. Chung Lee's article in the *Journal of Urology* (attached) regarding the "Future of Academic Urologists" may be of interest during this process.

## **FOURTH YEAR CLERKSHIPS**

Elective Clerkships are available in most surgical specialties. For those students who have not made a specific career choice, an elective early in the year may help the student make this important decision.

For students who are certain about their decision to enter Urology, it is NOT necessary to do Urology clerkships in the fourth year. Such students should do clerkships only if truly interested in a particular elective. Do not choose Urology clerkships simply to improve one's record or to prepare yourself for internship. It is much better for you to spend your fourth year doing electives that will address your clinical weaknesses, broaden your medical background, or that are simply fun and educational. It is entirely reasonable to choose Urology clerkships in the fourth year, but one should do so because: 1) it will help you make a career decision, or 2) the elective is an area in which you are keenly interested. Do not choose a fourth year clerkship because you think it will significantly improve your chances for residency. In all likelihood, it will not make a large difference.

Some students take electives at other institutions. This may be helpful if you are particularly interested in a given institution. Otherwise, consider the advice above regarding fourth year electives.

## **AUA MATCHING PROGRAM**

A third party, The American Urological Association, determines residency positions in Urology. All applicants must register through the AUA to obtain a match number to participate in this process (registration can be completed online at <https://www.auanet.org/eforms/resmatch/>). After researching and interviewing at your programs of interest, you will submit a list of programs ranked in order of your preference. In turn, residency programs nationwide will do the same. The AUA will then determine, according to the ranking preferences of applicants and programs, the matching of applicants with available residency positions. More information regarding the AUA Matching Program is available online at <http://www.auanet.org/residents/resmatch.cfm>.

## **APPLICATION FOR RESIDENCY IN UROLOGY**

### **Choose and Meet with Advisors**

The following faculty members have interest and experience in advising students regarding their career choices and application to residencies in Urology. Students should meet with two or more of these faculty-advisors on at least one occasion each to discuss their career choices, the application process and specific residencies. Faculty members and their areas of concentration include:

- Anthony J. Schaeffer, M.D., Department Chair, Female Urology and Urinary Incontinence
- Robert Brannigan, M.D., Male Reproductive Medicine/Surgery & Andrology
- Michael Carter, M.D., General Urology
- William Catalona, M.D., Prostate Cancer
- J. Quentin Clemens, M.D., Urodynamics and Female Urology
- Daniel Dalton, M.D., General Urology and Urologic Oncology
- John Garnett, M.D., General Urology and Urologic Oncology
- Chris Gonzalez, M.D., Laparoscopic/Minimally Invasive/Reconstructive Surgery
- Stephanie Kielb, M.D., Female Urology & Pelvic Floor Dysfunction
- James Kozlowski, M.D., Urologic Oncology
- William Lin, M.D., Male Reproductive Medicine
- Kevin McVary, M.D., Sexual Dysfunction
- Robert Nadler, M.D., Endourology and Stone Disease
- John Nanninga, M.D., Neurourology
- Norm Smith, M.D., Urologic Oncology & Prostate Diseases

You should obtain advice from these individuals regarding Urology programs. Appointments should be made with an advisor in April/May of your third year. Most may be contacted at (312) 908-8145. Those in private practice (Drs. Carter, Dalton, Garnett, and Lin) may be reached at (312) 926-3535. In addition, it is helpful to begin obtaining application materials by June or July.

Most students apply to 25-35 programs, although this may vary depending on the student's record. It is extremely important to have a sufficient number of "safety" programs (programs for which you will be highly competitive). As a rule, students who have a good performance during medical school should consider a combination of university and community hospital-based residency training programs. Application to a broad spectrum of programs is essential so that you will be assured of a position at the close of the AUA Match. Again, you should enlist the help of your faculty advisors for your strategy in applying to Urology programs.

When meeting with these faculty-advisors, provide them with copies of your medical school transcript, curriculum vitae, USMLE scores, and evaluation forms from your third year clerkships. This will help them in identifying programs for which you will be competitive.

A curriculum vitae or resume should include the following items:

- Full name (first, middle, and last)
- Address
- Education (high school, college, medical school)
- Research experience
- Honors (awards, scholarships, honor societies)
- Employment history (post-high school)
- Extracurricular activities and interests (community activity/volunteer work/hobbies/sports)
- Future plans, if known (academic practice, private practice, field of interest)
- Publications (authors, title of published work, specific journal citation with volume number, page and year).

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Three letters of recommendation are sufficient. More than three are unnecessary unless specifically required by a program. Request letters from faculty that know you or on whose service you rotated. There should be at least two letters from members of the Department of Urology. Faculty members are generally very happy to write letters for students and will write letters if they feel they know you sufficiently and can write a positive letter.

Typically, the faculty-advisors that you choose as your mentor may be better able to supply you with letters of recommendation.

Again, the student should present a medical school transcript, USMLE scores, a resume or a curriculum vitae, evaluations from third year clerkships, and if possible, personal statement to the faculty member. This will obviously help the faculty write the best possible letter of recommendation.

These letters should be requested early, before July or August if possible. There may be a lapse of time from when you request a letter until the letter is sent. Early requests insure the letters are received before the application deadlines at the institutions to which you apply. Be sure to provide the faculty members or their secretaries with a complete list of the exact names and addresses to which your recommendation letters should be sent. An electronic copy on disk is best. Pre-stamped envelopes are not necessary. These letters are generally sent on department stationary.

Be compulsive about obtaining appointments, requesting letters of recommendation and helping secretaries with addresses. Because many students apply to many programs, you should not expect letters of recommendation from faculty member sent out within 7-10 days. Try to avoid duplicate requests for letters to programs.

A letter of recommendation from the Chairman of Urology is desirable; some residency programs may ask for this specifically. After you have met with your advisor and selected those programs to which you will apply, you should make an appointment with the Chairman so that he can meet with you in anticipation of writing a letter on your behalf.

The Feinberg School mails the dean's letter by November 1. However, you should have your application materials and letters of recommendation sent in advance. For most programs, the deadline for application materials precedes distribution of Deans' letters. In summary, it is appropriate to begin deciding what programs to apply in May or June, request letters of recommendation between May and July and fill out applications in July or August. This should insure that your application is complete (except for the Dean's letter) by the end of September, which should easily meet most program deadlines. It is also helpful to contact programs in mid to late September to be sure they have received all of your application materials, letters of recommendation, etc.

## INTERVIEWS

November through December is the interviewing season. Most clinical faculty members are very understanding about short leaves of absence for interviews. Make sure you notify or request a leave of absence in advance. Schedule electives that are not so time consuming during the months you plan to interview. Some students bunch their interviews together and take vacation during this period of time. This is important if you are applying to a large number of programs all across the country. Most faculty members do not take vacations during this time (although brief absences due to scientific meetings are possible). Many housestaff are also involved in the residency application/ interviewing process; their impressions are valuable.

Some programs have deadlines after which they will not conduct interviews. Many programs interview on only a few select dates only. A call to confirm your interview may be advisable. Many programs interview in large groups, and it is possible for a program to misplace an application or make an appointment for the wrong date. It never hurts to confirm that all of your materials are in your file as well. If you need to cancel or reschedule your interview, be sure to call the program as soon as possible especially if you wish to reschedule. Even when canceling, you may be keeping an interview spot that could be offered to another candidate. Please be considerate to the program and your fellow applicants.

Remember that winter travel to and from Chicago is often adversely affected by weather conditions (snow, ice, etc.). Plan your airline and road travel accordingly, and allow time for unexpected delays or increased time for travel.

Make your travel arrangements so that you arrive early and are rested. Do not leave an institution without taking a tour of the facility and speaking with housestaff to learn about the program. Be sure all of your questions are answered. It is helpful to prepare a mental list of questions that should be answered.

The article by Teichman JM, Anderson KD, Dorough MM, Stein CR, Optenberg SA, Thompson IM: The Urology Residency Matching Program in Practice. *J Urol* 2000; 163: 1878-1887, regarding conduct and details of the match, may help you to form reasonable expectations and prepare yourself as you enter the matching process.

Questions to consider when you visit a program might include:

1. What kind of research opportunities are offered or required by the program?
2. What is the average number of operative cases for different levels of residency?
3. Is the program's case load sufficiently broad and variable?
4. How many hospitals participate in the training program? What is the level of supervision by attending surgeons? Do residents learn from attendings or do they learn from their own experience or other residents?
5. Are the house officers enthusiastic about the program? How many residents drop out each year?
6. Is the program pyramidal? Is there a "cut" after the first or second year?
7. Is the Department of Urology stable? Are the relationships among surgical specialties and Urology, General Surgery, Surgery and Medicine, etc., amiable?
8. When was the program last reviewed by the Residency Review Committee? Is the residency program approved or is it on probation?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
10. Is there an outpatient experience throughout each level of the residency program? (Emergency Room, outpatient clinic, Urologists' private offices)?
11. What fellowships do chief residents obtain?
12. What are the different resident rotations? Is there a good breadth of surgical experience?
13. What is the philosophy of the program? Are they trying to train academic urologists, private practitioners, both, etc.?
14. What is the call schedule generally like at the different levels of residency?

Appearance and poise are extremely important during an interview. Do not lose your composure. It is unusual for an interviewer to ask questions testing your medical and surgical knowledge. Most interviewers are interested in getting to know you as a person. For each of your interviews, be prepared to ask two or three specific questions about the program (it is sometimes advisable to present the same question or questions to each interviewer). These questions indicate your interest and knowledge of the specific program. Make sure that you have read all brochures and accompanying information that has been sent to you. Be prepared!

## **MATCHING**

Be realistic and balance the type of programs that you select. For example, ranking only prestigious programs without considering other less renowned but equally instructive programs is foolhardy. As a rule, students who have a good performance during medical school should consider a combination of university and community-hospital based residency training programs. Ranking of a spectrum of programs is essential so that you will be assured of a position at the conclusion of the match.

**Remember: SEEK ADVICE, PLAN AHEAD, STAY COOL...  
AND GOOD LUCK!**