

## ADVICE FOR NU MEDICAL STUDENTS PREPARING TO MATCH INTO ANESTHESIOLOGY PROGRAMS

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**ADVISORS:** The following is the list of attending physicians that are willing to guide students throughout the match process. They are all extremely approachable and full of practical advice. The Dean's office requires you to have an advisor by the start of your fourth year.

**What to do now:** Plan to meet with an attending physician towards the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> year to discuss the residency match process and fourth year plans. Use email as your preliminary means of contact and be flexible with your schedule.

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### CLERKSHIP/RECRUITMENT CONTACTS

Christopher Zell, MS, Residency Program Manager, 312-926-8132, [czell@nmff.org](mailto:czell@nmff.org)

Carolyn Betts, Program Assistant III &, MS4 Clerkship Coordinator, 312-926-8105, [cbetts@nmff.org](mailto:cbetts@nmff.org)

**ERAS:** You will receive information by mail early in your 4<sup>th</sup> year from the Dean's office on registering with ERAS. ERAS is the central electronic resource into which you input your CV, personal statement, work/academic history. You also apply to the programs of your choice through ERAS. Additionally, the Dean's office inputs your transcript, Dean's letter and the letters of recommendation (LORs) they receive from your letter writers into ERAS. In this manner, you complete all documentation once, and ERAS distributes it accordingly. The cost to apply to residency programs depends on the number of programs you apply to. Applying to two different variations of the same program is counted only one time (e.g. the Categorical and Advanced programs in Anesthesiology at Northwestern, see below).

**What to do now:** Finish a rough draft of your personal statement now while you have the time. Making revisions later will be easier once you have a working document to develop. Feel free to ask a faculty advisor or any of the residents for

advice on this task. Also, make sure you have a good, professional-looking head-neck portrait shot ready when the office of student affairs asks you for one to scan into ERAS.

**NRMP:** You will also need to register with the national residency matching program in the fall. The NRMP is what matches applicants to residencies once all of your interviewing is done. The Dean will remind you to do this at the appropriate time. The website is: [www.nrmp.org](http://www.nrmp.org)

What to do now: Find your USMLE Step 1 results that you received last summer. The report contains your unique USMLE code # that you will need to register with the NRMP. Keep this document where you can find it.

**LETTERS OF REC:** You may acquire as many letters of recommendation that faculty members are willing to write for you, though any residency program may be sent a maximum of 4 letters only. However, each program you apply to may not need to have the same number or combination of letters. For example, the anesthesiology programs you apply to may be satisfied reading letters from 3 different anesthesiology attendings and one attending from a different specialty. Conversely, having 1 anesthesia letter and 3 non-anesthesia letters would be much more favorable for preliminary/transitional medicine programs. **In general, positive letters from faculty in multiple specialties may be more impressive to a program director than reading all letters from a single specialty or rotation.**

What to do now:

- Finish strong in the clerkships at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> year and anticipate asking attendings in these rotations for LORs - Complete your CV and (if possible) your personal statement so that attendings may have these for reference.
- Acquire 5-6 LOR forms and fill in your ERAS #, prepare 5-6 stamped envelopes addressed to the Office of Student Affairs. Forms and envelopes are found in the office of Office of Student Affairs.

What to keep in mind:

- Allow a minimum of 1 month for letter writers to complete your LOR
- Neither harass, nor neglect your letter-writer. One courtesy email reminder after a month's time has elapsed is acceptable, but also insure that letters are complete and turned in to the office of student affairs by the second week of November at the absolute latest.
- Call the office of student affairs to check if they've received your LORs, instead of pestering the writer.
- Dr. Stock and Dr. Gil will each offer to write you a letter once you have successfully completed the clinical anesthesiology rotation.

**CLERKSHIPS & TEXTS:** Expect to spend a month in the O.R. during your clinical anesthesiology clerkship. During the third week of the rotation you will spend a day in each of the following services: Neuro/Spine Intensive Care Unit, Pain Management, Obstetric Anesthesiology and Pediatric Anesthesiology. The dept. will also provide you with the 'baby Miller' text for a refundable \$20 deposit. Try to schedule this rotation in July, August or September. Although October may also fit into your schedule, it makes it very difficult for Drs. Stock and Gil to write your letters with so little time. To complete a second rotation in a subspecialty area is a matter of personal choice. Available rotations include: Intensive Care Medicine, Pain Management, Obstetric Anesthesiology and a research elective. I highly recommend a month in the Neuro/Spine Intensive Care unit. This clerkship will help considerably in preparing you for your internship. It is an entirely anesthesiology staff-run unit, and offers some of the best teaching you'll experience in your 4<sup>th</sup> year. This also counts towards the required ICU rotation.

**ROTATION SCHEDULES:** The interviews will be conducted in November, December and January. Leave yourself at least 1 month free. If you must take an elective during either December or January, make it a flexible one (radiology, research elective, ambulatory medicine). If you intend to take your sub-I before interview season, the ideal times to schedule it are at the beginning of July or at the beginning of October. This gives you enough time to take your

anesthesiology rotations as well as providing ample time for letter writers to complete their work. Ask senior students how they organized their 4<sup>th</sup> year schedules for more specifics.

**AUDITIONS:** Clerkships at outside institutions are also a personal choice and a double-edged sword. Your performance may seal your fate for good or ill depending on your experience. If you intend not only to audition at another school, but also to acquire a LOR from a faculty member there, you'll have to schedule this clerkship in July or August to provide extra time for them. Their allegiance is with their own students and that must be appreciated.

What to do now: Call the Department of Anesthesiology or the Office of Medical Education at the school of interest and get the ball rolling for the audition ASAP. As a rule, setting up an outside clerkship takes an extraordinary length of time. Some schools even require a letter of support from your home turf just to take a clerkship there. You need plenty of time to set this into your schedule.

What to keep in mind: A very reasonable alternative to an audition is scheduling a 'second look' at the institution of interest once you've interviewed. Often you can spend a day in the O.R. and really express your interest adequately with a second look rather than spending an entire month there.

**PROGRAMS: TRANSITIONAL vs. PRELIMINARY vs. CATEGORICAL:**

Many anesthesiology programs offer a comprehensive 4-year program (categorical) which includes the internship year at their institution, as well as a 3-year anesthesiology program (advanced) which allows you to complete your internship elsewhere. Some programs only offer the advanced sequence. If you elect to complete your internship at an institution different from that which you intend to join for anesthesiology, you must decide between transitional and preliminary programs in internal medicine (or a prelim year in gen. surgery for the brave). You can of course apply and interview at all different kinds of program. Transitional programs are typically offered at smaller, community-based hospitals that may or may not have major academic center affiliations. Usually, a greater portion of your transitional year is spent on elective months. There is often a requirement to spend time in OB, general surgery and pediatrics. This appeals to many anesthesiology candidates since it complements our future training. Preliminary internal medicine programs are offered by the same community hospitals as well as major academic centers and are often indistinguishable from the 1<sup>st</sup> year internal medicine programs. Most of your internship will be spent doing ward medicine in a prelim program. This is another area where it would be helpful to ask the senior students and current residents for their thoughts.

What to keep in mind: Remember that each preliminary or transitional year you apply to is considered another stand-alone program just like anesthesiology. The amount of interviewing can become quite overwhelming, so be cautious how many 1<sup>st</sup>-year programs you apply to. You'll be glad to know that if you apply to a categorical anesthesiology program, you needn't concurrently apply or interview for internal medicine at the same institution. You would be automatically accepted as a preliminary medicine intern if you match there for anesthesiology.

**INTERVIEWING/ AIRFARE/ HOTELS:** This is getting a bit ahead of your concerns at the moment, but just remember that the match process is a continuum. Everything that happens is dependent on actions that preceded it. The earlier you speak with an advisor, the earlier you acquire LORs, the earlier you complete your CV/personal statement, and the earlier you complete the ERAS application, the earlier you will get invitations for interviews. When you have punctuality on your side, you have a greater shot at scheduling interviews in common geographic areas at the same time. It is a challenge, but possible if you're efficient at getting your application done.

**INVITATIONS FOR INTERVIEW:** If you have a strong interest in a particular program, you may improve your chance of being invited for an interview by communicating that interest. Programs often must select interviewees from a list of hundreds of ERAS participants. Usually they have no way of knowing who has a special interest in their program or region of the country. You have two options. You may take the time to individualize your personal statement on the ERAS system for any program you are particularly interested in. This works, but only if they read your personal statement. Programs schedule most of their interviews very soon after the Dean's letters come out on November 1<sup>st</sup>. You may decide to contact programs directly by E-mail, or other means, and communicate why you are particularly interested in their

program. This is usually effective in prompting the program coordinator to review your application, perhaps for the first time, and may prevent it from being overlooked.

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