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Factors Affecting Emergency Medicine Residency Applicant Perceptions of Competitiveness and Number of Applications Submitted

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Program: Emergency Medicine
Type: Original Research

Background: Applicants to emergency medicine (EM) residency applied to an average of 56.6 programs each in 2018, more than double the number compared to one decade ago.

Methods: Fourth-year medical students (n=132) attending the Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association Medical Student Forum at the 2018 Scientific Assembly were asked to complete a 24 question survey. Response rate was 80.2%. Students who were IMGs, couples or military matching, had not taken Step 1, or had not completed or received their grade from at least one EM rotation were excluded (leaving n=72). Descriptive and summary statistics were used.

Results: The median Step 1 score was 226.3, and 15.9% were AOA. Students were 61.1% MD and 38.9% DO. Step 1 scores decreased perceptions of competitiveness for 53%, while increasing perception in 35%. Feedback from EM mentors and rotations (75% and 71%), leadership and extracurricular activities (67% and 66%), and Standardized Letter of Evaluation (SLOE) strength (65%) contributed to increased perception of competitiveness (Figure 1). The most common factors increasing applications submitted included; EM is becoming more competitive (83%), lack of SLOE transparency (70%), belief they are less competitive than the average applicant (69%), or unsure about their competitiveness (66%).

Conclusions: Step 1 scores caused more than half of applicants to decrease their perception of competitiveness. Feedback from EM mentors and EM rotations increased applicants’ perception of competitiveness. The top three factors increasing residency applications were the belief that EM is becoming more competitive, lack of SLOE transparency, and an applicant’s belief that they are less competitive.

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