

ACFAS Update

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF FOOT AND ANKLE SURGEONS

Readying Yourself for Residency



J.T. Marcoux, DPM, FACFAS, residency director at Steward-St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, Brighton, MA

Entering a residency program can be exciting, demanding, terrifying and exhausting all at once, but with some practical guidance from J.T. Marcoux, DPM, FACFAS, residency director at Steward-St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, you can ensure your transition from student to resident is as smooth as possible.

When first evaluating residency programs, Dr. Marcoux recommends you look for those best suited to your clinical and surgical interests while also considering the:

- number and diversity of available cases;
- number and experience of training faculty;
- number of residents within the program;
- amount of travel necessary from the primary training site.

He also suggests you determine if case review, clinical and surgical skills labs, lectures and journal club are performed regularly with faculty involvement.

To improve your chances of securing a residency position, Dr. Marcoux says to obtain an externship or to visit the programs that interest you. "Matching a quality program is only part of the equation for success," he reminds. "Residency training isn't a passive experience—to excel, you must devote much time, effort and dedication to reap the rewards in the end."

Dr. Marcoux's experience as a residency director has given him insight into what makes a potential resident stand out. He prefers students who have rotated at the program (or have visited) because he can see firsthand how they interact with residents, attending and ancillary staff. "I also prefer students who have participated in extracurricular activities or athletics because over the years, I've found that they tend to be better at multitasking and work well as team members," he says.

While grades are important to Dr. Marcoux, he values the "intangibles" more—self-motivation, teachability and good communication and social skills. He also looks for hand skills and coordination, spatial awareness and willingness to work as part of a team.

Once you are accepted into a residency program, the program director, resident(s) and coordinator will welcome you to the institution and will help you in the transition. You will also receive a contract or commitment letter to sign. Dr. Marcoux advises that in the months preceding the start of your residency, you continue to hone your clinical and surgical skills as you complete your final rotations.

Dr. Marcoux emphasizes since the process of securing a residency is highly competitive, it is important to determine what type of program fits you best, both professionally and personally. He also reminds you to make the most of all clinical and surgical experiences since the three years spent in residency pass so quickly. And lastly, he wants you to know that you will always have the support of your program director and teaching faculty.

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Fine-Tune Your Skills Through a Fellowship



J. Michael Miller, DPM, FACFAS,
Director of the
American Health
Network Foot & Ankle
Reconstructive Surgery
Fellowship, Indianapolis

If you have completed your residency but are undecided about applying for a fellowship, J. Michael Miller, DPM, FACFAS, just might be able to convince you of the long-term benefits a fellowship can have on your career.

When he participated in an AOTrauma Fellowship at Harborview Medical Center (University of Washington Hospital) after completing his residency at Loyola University Medical Center in Chicago, he embraced the opportunity to learn new thought processes and procedures in a different environment. "I quickly learned about the regional differences in addressing lower extremity pathology and acquired many new skills I have carried with me throughout my career," says Dr. Miller.

Now as director of the American Health Network (AHN) Foot & Ankle Reconstructive Surgery Fellowship in Indianapolis, Dr. Miller sees firsthand how a fellowship can set you apart from others in your field. "Our fellows traditionally have more doors open to them when it comes to employment and teaching opportunities. Not only does a fellowship help you hone your skills, expand your knowledge and gain a new perspective on pathology, it shows you're committed to furthering your education, which is attractive to employers," he says.

Dr. Miller also points out that while some fellowship programs are an extension of residency training, most are not. Many fellowship programs focus on areas outside of the surgical setting, such as clinical efficiency, research or effective ways to run a business. AHN's program follows a "Fellow First" philosophy that takes into account the fellow's skillset and needs.

And, just what does Dr. Miller look for in a potential fellow? "I look for someone who's personable, has high aptitude and ability, and most of all, wants to learn. Teaching requires a lot of energy, so if the person is motivated, easy to work with and enjoyable to be around, it makes the education process more pleasant for everyone," says Dr. Miller.

He recommends those considering a fellowship to ask themselves a few key questions to identify what they want out of life and their career. "Are you committed and compassionate? Is this a career in which you're investing your life's work or just a job? If your goal is to become a leader in the profession, then a fellowship may be the right choice for you," he advises.

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