

DPM Foot and Ankle Fellowship Selection Criteria: Survey of Fellowship Directors



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

A recent linear increase of podiatric fellowships has occurred as the field continues to progress. Research regarding selection criteria per a fellowship director’s perspective for potential fellows is lacking. This study aims to examine objective and subjective selection criteria directors consider when selecting applicants for the interview and when ranking prospective fellows following the interview.

METHODOLOGY:

Institutional review board (Wake Forest Baptist Health, Winston-Salem, North Carolina) approval was obtained (IRB00050406) to perform a survey of DPM fellowships directors across the United States (Figure 1). The authors electronically surveyed ACFAS fellowship directors with pre-selected criteria for granting applicants an interview and when compiling their ranking list following the interview (Table 1). After the initial survey was sent out, a reminder email was sent to each applicant at one week time intervals for four additional weeks in an effort to maximize the response rate. The data was collected, and participant responses were de-identified and managed using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), (available at <http://redcapwakehealth.edu>) which serves as a secure, electronic database system. A Likert scale of 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) was utilized to prioritize each criterion, an average rating was then calculated, and results placed in order of importance.

RESULTS:

There are a total of 43 ACFAS fellowship programs consisting of three subtypes: recognized (31), research (1) and conditional (11). In our study, we received a response from 17 fellowship directors (39.5%). The most important selection criteria for granting an interview (Table 2) were quality of residency program (1.985), a written personal statement stating reasons for attending that fellowship (2.063), and publications/presentations produced as a resident (2.267). The most important criteria in completing the ranking order following the interview (Table 3) were assessment of applicant's personality (1.111), interview performance (1.173), and expressed interest in program (1.563).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Knowledge of selection criteria fellowship directors seek in applicants can assist those who desire to further their training. Limitations of this study include a small sample size and a low response rate. The present study was also complicated by locating a valid personal email address for each fellowship director. Selection criteria program directors seek differed between being selected for the interview which combined both objective and subjective criteria and when compiling their rankings following the interview which included only subjective criteria. Results show more emphasis towards subjective selection criteria when directors select applicants for an interview and when ranking applicants following the interview.

Selection Criteria Questionnaire	
Pre-Interview	Post-Interview
Letter of recommendation from residency program director	Letter of recommendation from residency program director
Letter of recommendation from "specific" staff other than program director (i.e. other Podiatric, Orthopedic, Vascular, Plastic surgeon or other Medical Physician or Specialist)	Letter of recommendation from "specific" staff other than program director (i.e. other Podiatric, Orthopedic, Vascular, Plastic surgeon or other Medical Physician or Specialist)
NBPME passing scores	NBPME passing scores
Publications and presentations produced as a resident	Publications and presentations produced as a resident
Sub-specialty specific research (Podiatric or further specialized research in foot and ankle surgery)	Sub-specialty specific research (Podiatric or further specialized research in foot and ankle surgery)
Quality of residency program	Quality of residency program
Personal statement	Personal statement
Awards and/or honors in residency	Awards and/or honors in residency
Podiatric medical school performance	Podiatric medical school performance
Quality of podiatric medical school	Other advanced degrees (i.e MS, MBA, PhD, etc)
Other advanced degrees (i.e MS, MBA, PhD, etc)	Written personal statement for desired reasons for attending specific fellowship
Written personal statement for desired reasons for attending specific fellowship	Extracurricular activities
Extracurricular activities	Interview performance
Personal statement expressing desire to pursue career in Orthopedic Practice or Orthopedic Department	Post interview performance
Personal statement expressing desire to pursue academic career in Orthopedic Practice or Orthopedic Department of Hospital System	Expressed interest in program by applicant
	Desire to pursue academic career
	Desire to pursue career in Orthopedic practice or Orthopedic department of hospital system
	Assessment of applicants personality following interview

Table 1

Order of Importance of Criteria When Selecting Applicants for an Interview	
Criteria	Average Rank of Importance
Quality of residency program	1.985
Written personal statement for desired reasons for attending specific fellowship	2.063
Publications and presentations produced as a resident	2.268
Personal statement	2.444
Letter of recommendation from "specific" staff other than program director (i.e. other Podiatric, Orthopedic, Vascular, Plastic surgeon or other Medical Physician or Specialist)	2.478
Podiatric medical school performance	2.493
Quality of podiatric medical school	2.493
Awards and/or honors in residency	2.503
Sub-specialty specific research (Podiatric or further specialized research in foot and ankle surgery)	2.555
Letter of recommendation from residency program director	2.588
Extracurricular activities	2.738
Other advanced degrees (i.e MS, MBA, PhD, etc)	2.775
NBPME passing scores	2.823
Personal statement expressing desire to pursue career in Orthopedic Practice or Orthopedic Department	2.853
Personal statement expressing desire to pursue academic career in Orthopedic Practice or Orthopedic Department of Hospital System	2.938

Table 2

Order of Importance of Criteria When Ranking Applicants Following the Interview	
Criteria	Average Rank of Importance
Assessment of applicant's personality following interview	1.111
Interview performance	1.173
Expressed interest in program by applicant	1.563
Post interview performance	1.643
Quality of residency program	1.923
Written personal statement for desired reasons for attending specific fellowship	2.299
Publications and presentations produced as a resident	2.378
Sub-specialty specific research (Podiatric or further specialized research in foot and ankle surgery)	2.378
Letter or recommendation from "specific" staff other than program director (i.e. other Podiatric, Orthopedic, Vascular, Plastic surgeon or Medical Physician or Specialist)	2.408
Personal statement expressing desire to pursue academic career	2.478
Awards and/or honors in residency	2.511
Letter of recommendation from residency program director	2.518
Podiatric medical school performance	2.525
NBPME passing scores	2.595
Extracurricular activities	2.688
Desire to pursue academic career	2.699
Desire to pursue career in Orthopedic practice or Orthopedic department of hospital system	2.735
Other advanced degrees (i.e. MS, MBA, PhD, etc)	2.944

Table 3



Figure 1: Distribution of DPM Fellowships