

## What Priorities Do Medical Students Use in Choosing a Residency Program? Is It Excellence or Real Estate? (Location, Location, Location)

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### Introduction

Graduating medical students face several dilemmas such as which discipline and to which programs to apply for residency. Once interviewed at several programs they must decide how to rank them. This survey aims to inquire as to the logic used by individuals from our medical school in choosing an anesthesiology residency program.

### Methods

A questionnaire was sent to medical students or graduates from our medical school accepted or presently engaged in anesthesia residency. The structure of the questionnaire is shown in Tables 1 and 2. The respondents name was not recorded on the survey sheet and the questionnaire was returned anonymously.

### Results

Tables 1 and 2 shows the questionnaire sent to the residents as well as the scores for each response (n=20).

### Discussion

Once the medical student has made the decision about which specialty to train, the next important decision they have to make is at which program. Canadian data suggest <sup>1</sup> that even this decision may not be straightforward. Seventeen percent of respondents reported that if they were given a chance to change disciplines they would either like to change or were undecided about their commitment. Of the undecided group, 45% matched to their first-ranked program.

Choosing residency is among the most important decisions a student will make. Intuitively, one would postulate that this decision would be based on strong objective information such as the program's reputation and ranking, as well as the opportunity for fellowship training. However, our cohort, while limited, chose geographic location and family ties as their most important factors. The passing rates of board examinations and the presence of role models, required scores on the annual in training exam, and the requirement to pass USMLE part 3 were secondary components in their decision-making.

### Conclusion

Factors, other than program reputation and ranking, play a large role in the matching process. Our experience would support this finding. This despite a recent increase in the program's reputation, financial investment, innovative programs, grant support and the hiring of prestigious new faculty. Location is the principal determinant in a medical student's choice of residency program. In order to extract more information we plan to continue collecting data next year.

### Summary

The proportion of medical students showing a preference for anesthesiology is increasing. This study is based on a questionnaire administered to individuals accepted to anesthesiology residency programs. It aimed to identify factors that led to the choice of a particular program.

### References

1. CMAJ 1998; 158:696

Table 1: When making your choice of residency programs; what factor was most important?  
Please rank in order from 1-10

Question	Average Score	Rank
Geography	4.6	1
Educational/research opportunities	4.9	2
Family ties	5.2	3
Perceived happiness of current residents	5.2	3
Interview experience	5.6	4
Programs' commitment to residents	5.6	4
Program reputation	5.8	5
Availability of Fellowship training	6.9	6
Perceived collaborative team spirit in the department	6.9	5
Perceived stability of the department	7.4	7

Table 2: Which factors were included in your decision not to consider certain programs for residency training

Question	Number of Interns Answering Yes	Rank
Passing rates on board examinations	11/20	1
Lack of perceived role models	10/20	2
Required scores on the annual in training examination	5/20	3
Requirement to pass USMLE 3 exam	5/20	3
Income level of residents	4/20	4
Available affordable housing	3/20	5