The specialty of anesthesiology has seen an incredible demand over the past few years. According to the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) Results and Data report for 2023, 2,040 candidates matched. Of those PGY-1 residency spots available, over 99% were filled overall. With increasing interest comes increasing competitiveness and an expansion in application congestion for residency programs. In order to create a more equitable and transparent system, program signaling – a system that allows participants to indicate interest in a limited number of residency programs and geographic preferences began as a voluntary process to benefit both the applicant and the residency program with the continued virtual residency interview process.

Communication between medical schools, dean’s offices, anesthesiology advisors, residency programs, and applicants is thought to be more crucial than ever to ensure transparency between these entities. We sought to identify how medical students, recently matched anesthesiology residents, and program directors advise students on how to utilize signaling, while also exploring how programs employ signaling throughout the journey of creating their own residency classes.

If we can improve communication between advising entities and residency applicants and transparency between applicants and programs, then applicants may be better served to make informed decisions about how/why to signal programs. Anesthesiology programs will then, in turn, interview and recruit the most interested and qualified applicants, diversifying matched residency classes.


Prepared by a team from the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion group in Anesthesiology (JEDI):

Natalie J. Koons DO, Rachel Moquin EdD, Jennifer M. Lucero MD MA, Allison J. Lee MD MS, Adam J. Milam MD PhD, Matthew C. Wixson MD, Enyo Ablordeppey MD MPH, Scott D. Markowitz MD MS

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Comments and permissions: scott.markowitz@wustl.edu