

Addressing unmatched ophthalmology applicants in Canadian residency programs: Exploring viable solutions

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Statement of the Problem: Applicants to ophthalmology have experienced disproportionately higher rates of going unmatched during the CaRMS process compared to other specialties. Our research aims to examine this phenomenon by identifying trends and comparing match data to other specialties.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Using a retrospective, cross-sectional design, Qualitative trends in CaRMS outcomes of ophthalmology applicants were compared to other specialties from 2013-2022.

Findings: Data was obtained from 608 ophthalmology, 5,153 surgery, and 3,092 top five (most competitive) specialty first choice applicants from 2013-2022. Ophthalmology applicants were more likely to go unmatched (18.9% [120/608]) than applicants to the top five (11.9% [371/3,092]) and surgical (13.5% [702/5,153]) specialties ($p<0.001$) and were twice as likely to rank no alternate disciplines (31.8%; $p<0.001$) over the study period. In the first iteration, when alternate disciplines were ranked, match rate to alternate disciplines was highest for ophthalmology applicants (0.41; $p<0.001$). The majority (57.8%) of unmatched ophthalmology applicants do not participate in the second iteration.

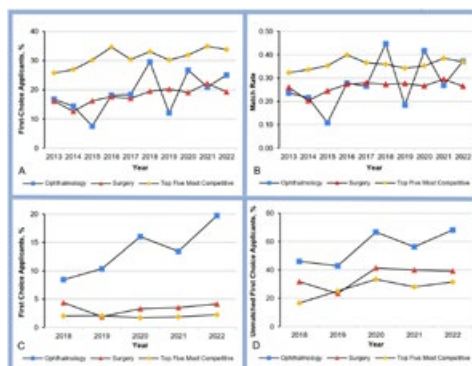


Figure. (A) Percentage of first choice applicants to discipline who matched to an alternate discipline in the first iteration; (B) Match rate of first choice applicants who applied to an alternate discipline in the first iteration; (C) Percentage of first choice applicants to discipline who did not participate in the second iteration; (D) Percentage of unmatched first choice applicants to discipline who did not participate in the second iteration.

Conclusions & Significance: First choice ophthalmology applicants were more likely to go unmatched, rank no alternate disciplines and choose not to participate in the second iteration. To help address the alarming rise in unmatched applicants, we have developed seven recommendations for all competitive medical residency programs across Canada.

Biography

Mostafa Bondok has a background in Medical Education, Health Equity, Accessibility Technology, and Methodological studies. He is a medical student at the University of British Columbia.

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