Association of Pediatric Program Directors

The Virtual Reality of Applying to Pediatric Subspecialties

Prepare for the 2021 Application Season

June 30, 2021

CoPS Council of Pediatric Subspecialties

Format for Today's Meeting

- Turn on video so we can see each other
- Rename yourself on Zoom so we know your name and where you are
  - e.g., Jenny Duncan, Washington University
- Keep audio on mute unless talking to avoid background noise
- If any questions/comments come up as we are presenting, please put them in the chat box

Virtual Café Planning Group

- COPs – Council of Pediatric Subspecialties
  - **Jill Fussell and Deb Boyer**
- APPD
  - FEC - Christina Barron, **Jenny Duncan**, Meredith Bone, **Hayley Gans**, YoungNa Lee-Kim
  - Program Coordinator EC – Melissa Bales, **Elizabeth Wueste**

Q&A Panelists

Fellowship PDs

- Dr. Angela Czaja – PCCM, Univ. of CO
- Dr. Jerri Rose – PEM, Rainbow Babies
- Dr. Cuoghi Edens – Rheumatology, Univ. of Chicago
- Dr. Roshan George – Nephrology, Emory
- Dr. Scott Borinstein – Hem Onc, Vanderbilt
- Dr. Wayne Price – NICU, UNC, Chapel Hill

Incoming Fellows

- Dr. Samad - Pulmonology
- Dr. Spyridakis – PCCM
- Dr. Niccum – Cardiology
- Dr. Lebowitz - Gastroenterology

Agenda

- Updates regarding 2021 interview season
- Virtual Interview Tips
- Q&A with Panel of Fellowship Program Directors and Incoming Fellows

Fellowship Recruitment Action Team

- APPD – Becky Blankenburg, John Frohna, Linda Waggoner-Fountain, Laura Degnon, Rosemary Haynes
- APPD FEC – Jennifer Kesselheim, Jenny Duncan, Hayley Gans
- CoPS – Jill Fussell, Debra Boyer
- AMSPDC – Doug Carlson
- Fellowship Coordinators: Melissa Bales and Meghan Stawitcke
- Current/Former Fellows
  - Abigail Keogh, PGY6 Child Abuse Pediatrics, Hasbro Children's, Brown
  - Alicia Williams, PGY6 Peds Critical Care, Lurie Children's, Northwestern
  - Adrienne Smallwood (PGY5, PEM Fellowship, Baylor)
  - Danielle Shin, Instructor, Peds Heme/Onc, Stanford

Recruitment Taskforce - Goals

- Helping applicants find the best program for them
- Creating consistency in fellowship recruitment processes
- Creating a fair and equitable application process

Guidance for Fellowship Recruitment

- How to get more information about fellowship programs
  - CoPS subspecialties info: https://www.pedsubs.org/about-cops/subspecialty-descriptions/
  - CoPS Faculty Contacts: https://www.pedsubs.org/faculty-contacts/
  - CoPS subspecialty representatives: https://www.pedsubs.org/membership/representatives/

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Recommendations to residency programs

- Residency PDs – put in LORs any circumstances that changed due to COVID
- Recommendations to fellowship programs
  - Holistic review
  - Recognize applicants may have experienced non-traditional rotations, decreased opportunities for research and extracurricular activities
  - Reduce letter of rec requirements
  - All virtual interviews - local and non-local applicants
    - Consider alternative strategies to showcase your program

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Recommendations to fellowship programs

- Offer at least as many interviews as there are spots
- Send interview invites after 4pm EST to minimize daytime disruptions
- Allow at least 72 hours for response to interview invites
- Be flexible with scheduling
- Be mindful of any accommodations needed on interview day

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Recommendations to fellowship programs

- APPD recommends programs conduct virtual synchronous (not recorded), single day interviews
  - Including local applicants
- Recommended programs NOT send swag or food
- In person visits – not likely recommended if they involve formal contact with the program prior to rank lists being turned in
- Abide by NRMP rules for communication and try to limit post-interview communication to follow up questions
  - http://www.nrmp.org/communication-code-of-conduct/

On or ***BEFORE*** July 21st

- Make sure all components of your application are visible in ERAS
  - CV entries
  - Personal statement
  - Photo (if you want to include one)
  - LOR
    - It is ok to email you letter writers on/around July 13th to remind
    - It can take up to 5 days from the time the LOR is loaded in ERAS for it to be linked to your application -> ideally get loaded by July 20th

Virtual Interview Tips

- AAMC Preparation Guide for Applicants Participating in Virtual Interviews (PDF)
- https://thalamusgme.com/top-5-video-interviewing-tips-for-residency-and-fellowship-programs/
- https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/video-interview-guide

- Interviews - If canceling, cancel at least 2 weeks ahead

The Virtual Interview Day Structure

- Plan to block out a full day (schedules will vary):
  - Multiple faculty interviews ~ 20-30m each
    - Potential for panel of interviewers
  - Meeting with a fellow or small group of fellows
    - Potential for this to be done separately or optionally
  - Possible observation of a conference or educational session
  - Some type of tour (video vs live)
- Technology structure – will vary
  - May have multiple separate virtual meetings
  - May have one virtual link with breakout rooms

Gather Interview Information

- Video interview platform (e.g. Zoom, Teams, BlueJeans)
- Number of interviewers
- Interview length
- Types of interview questions
- Competencies or skills assessed during the interview (if provided)
  - Reflect on experiences and your CV
  - Think of example experiences
  - Discuss with your advisors
- Read about the interviewers and the program ahead of time

Optimize your interview environment

- Private and quiet location – no distractions
- Optimal technology – webcam and microphone
- Good internet – if not, talk to your residency PD about an alternative location
- Make sure that your background is neutral without clutter
- Software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have virtual and blur background features
  - Avoid these
  - Make sure the pictures/art behind you are appropriate

Optimize your interview environment

- Check your lighting
  - Avoid having sources of bright light directly behind you
  - A light source in front of you will help the interviewer see you
- Consider having the following nearby
  - Bottle of water
  - Pen/pad of paper
  - Copy of your CV

Test the technology beforehand

- Laptop or iPad/Tablet are better than a phone
- Test your webcam and microphone with the specific video platform.
- Make sure your laptop is plugged in
- If you're using wireless headphones, make sure they are charged
- If your WiFi is shaky, consider an ethernet cable or alternate location
- If the video conferencing software requires a profile picture, make sure the picture is professional
- Look at your device's camera not the screen
- Practice with peers/advisors live and/or record yourself

Proactively remove potential distractions

- Inform anyone in your immediate vicinity that you have an upcoming video conference
- Turn off any device notifications (email, messages)
- Silence cell/home phones and mute any other loud device cell
  - Take off your Apple Watch or turn off notifications
- Put your pets (or small children) in another room



Appearance matters

- Arrive 2-3 minutes early (this also is helpful for troubleshooting tech issues)
- Dress professionally as you would for an in-person interview
  - Consider wearing shoes – many people instinctively pull their legs up if barefoot which changes your body language
- Use a stationary chair
  - Swivel chairs are distracting.
- Position the camera at eye level – ensure eye contact
  - Listen attentively and with accompanying body language as you would during a face to face conversation
  - Sit still, lean forwards slightly and make minimal use of your hands – this makes you look more engaged

Go with the flow

- If your computer audio isn't working, consider dialing into the meeting by phone for the audio component
- Whatever occurs, be flexible – people understand
- Your ability to improvise could be perceived as a great strength when it comes to programs thinking about characteristics they want in a fellow

Be nice to everyone

- To the administrative assistant or program coordinator who reaches out to schedule
- To the program director
- To the interviewers
- To the fellows
- Ask questions in a “coming from curious” way rather than an accusatory one
  - Example: “I hear you guys don’t have any trauma experience on site. What’s that like?”
  - Better: “Can you tell me how the program ensures that fellows get good trauma experience?”

Be engaged!

- Try to join additional social offerings – but don't feel obligated to go to everything
  - These may help the program get a better sense of who you are
  - Helps you get a better sense of the collegiality of the program
  - If these make you horribly uncomfortable, it is ok to skip

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Thank You

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