

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO SECURING A RESIDENCY

*Brought to you by the APMA Young Physicians' Program (YPP) and the  
Podiatry Insurance Company of America, the founding partner of the YPP.*

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## INTRODUCTION

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How many times have you heard the statement, “Today is the first day of the rest of your life”? While that statement may seem trite to you, it is essentially true for your first day in residency. Because your residency program will lead to your practice career in podiatric medicine, you really will be starting the “rest of your life” on the day you begin your residency. So that day, and the days and months leading up to it, are extremely important.

This manual is designed to help you get to that point. Our goal is to provide you with information that will aid you in the process of residency search and selection. We hope to give you up-to-date resources and tools for your search that will help you to make some big decisions.

Residency search and selection are very similar to a job search. Therefore, the process and skills needed are also very similar. You will need to be organized and prepared. This is your opportunity to shine. This guide is designed to help you do all of that and more.

Prospective podiatric residents face a competitive landscape. The ratio of graduating students to the number of available entry-level residency positions is slightly imbalanced. The profession is working hard to create a sufficient number of residency positions to allow for variation from year to year. It is important that, as an applicant, you understand that no one can predict exactly how many positions will be available in a given match cycle and plan accordingly. Proper planning and research will make the process easier for you.

This manual is not intended to find you a residency program; only you can do that. But using this guide and the online resources listed in this guide will assist you with the process and allow you to concentrate on the important issues. It will provide you an idea of what to expect and some tips for being successful in the process of selecting clerkships and residencies, interviewing, and following up. We hope that you will find it helpful and use it as a resource for your residency search. Good luck!

## GETTING STARTED AND GETTING ORGANIZED

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There are many ways to get organized. Whatever method works best for you is the method you should use. Never before in your life has the need for organization been so great. Several organizational tips are outlined below to make your life easier during your residency search.

**Calendars:** Most students find that calendars are extremely effective in organizing day-to-day events and upcoming residency deadlines. If you maintain a calendar effectively, it can be an outstanding source of organization. Make sure you record all of the necessary information on the calendar, including application deadlines, fee deadlines, rotation dates, individual interview dates, and Centralized Residency Interview Program (CRIP) site dates. If you use a month-at-a-glance program, you will be able to see what deadlines are approaching and what your commitments are for the upcoming month.

**Lists:** Many students find that making lists is another mechanism to stay organized. Lists work well, but they work only when you have an organized place to keep the lists that you make. A day planner with a pad of paper attached or a calendar or memo pad on an electronic device are effective. Making lists can also be rewarding; every time you complete a task, you can cross it off your list. Small feelings of accomplishment are always beneficial in the clerkship and residency search process.

**Files:** One good organizational tip is to create electronic or paper files for each residency program. You may want to note any deadlines on the front of the file and keep the files in order by deadline date, visit date, or interview date and time. Any information you collect about the program can be kept in this file, including program director name with contact information and a list of the names of faculty and residents. Keep articles that have been published by the program's faculty or residents in the file as well. This system will keep you from getting programs mixed up. It also gives you plenty of room to collect and organize information. Keep detailed notes about each program, including impressions from visits. When you interview with that program, you can use these materials as a quick reference.

## RESOURCES

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There are numerous publications and online resources available for you to use during your residency search. Each has different information, and you will need to work with multiple resources to get all the information you need to make educated decisions about which programs are best suited to your needs and goals.

Below is a list of the most commonly used publications and websites for residency search. They are listed in no specific order.

In addition to the resources below, podiatric medical college websites often include useful information for the residency applicant (see for a list of [colleges](#) and websites). Usually, information about residencies can be found in the student affairs section of the respective websites. Occasionally, college websites have a separate area devoted to residency information.

### **American Podiatric Medical Association**

Students can access the [American Podiatric Medical Association's](#) (APMA) website by using their member number, which can be obtained by contacting the APMA Membership department at 800-ASK-APMA. Log in to access member information. The Young Physicians' section of APMA.org ([www.apma.org/youngphysicians](http://www.apma.org/youngphysicians)) may be of particular interest to students, and the *Your APMA* insert ([www.apma.org/yourapma](http://www.apma.org/yourapma)) in *APMA News* (beginning with the March 2012 issue) provides a wealth of information and practical advice for students, residents, and young physicians. *APMA News* and *Your APMA* include advice from residency program directors and former students regarding the interview process and improving your odds at securing a residency program. This information has been compiled on a page of [residency search and interview resources](#). This page is updated regularly.

### **Council on Podiatric Medical Education**

The [Council on Podiatric Medical Education's](#) (CPME) website provides the latest available lists of approved residencies (this information was published in the past as CPME 300, *Approved Residencies in Podiatric Medicine*). The lists on CPME.org include information about all approved programs ([www.cpme.org/cpme300](http://www.cpme.org/cpme300)) and programs eligible for their first on-site evaluations ([www.cpme.org/newresidencies](http://www.cpme.org/newresidencies)).

Students should always keep in mind that a new program may not accept a resident until CPME has provisionally approved the program. Provisional approval is determined based on the results of an on-site evaluation prior to activation of the residency.

The lists on CPME.org provide basic information only. For each program, you will find the name and address of the sponsoring institution, the name and phone number of the program director, the program category, the number of positions available, whether the program has

been granted probationary approval, and for most programs, a hyperlink to the website of the sponsoring institution and/or the podiatric residency program. It is important to remember that inactive programs are still listed as approved programs, but there will be a note as to the training year(s) in which the program is inactive. You will need to do sufficient research to make sure the program is still active and viable.

CPME.org is updated regularly. Make sure you always have the most current information.

CPME implemented the most recent revisions to CPME 320, [Standards and Requirements for Approval of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Residencies](#), on July 1, 2013. CPME 320 relates to a single three-year residency category: the Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Residency (PMSR). Completion of the residency leads to the following certification pathways: the American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM) and the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS). Residencies that can provide a sufficient volume and diversity of reconstructive rearfoot/ankle (RRA) procedures may be granted an added RRA credential. Completion of a PMSR with the added credential leads to the RRA certification pathway of ABFAS.

CPME publication 925, [Complaint Procedures](#): This document is one we hope you will never need. Nevertheless, it is important to know that there are mechanisms to file a formal complaint about the program's policies and procedures and/or the way interviews and selection are handled. Your complaint must be made in writing and signed but will be handled confidentially by CPME staff.

## **CASPR**

There are two websites for CASPR: [www.casprcrip.org](http://www.casprcrip.org) is a public website with general information including the latest updates, schedules, and user guides; and [www.CASPRweb.org](http://www.CASPRweb.org) is a password-protected portal for communication purposes. The *CASPR Directory of Podiatric Residency Programs* is provided online at [CASPRcrip.org](http://CASPRcrip.org) by the Central Application Service for Podiatric Residencies (CASPR), part of the American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine (AACPM). It includes the name, address, and contact person at each program. In addition, it has valuable information about the hospital, the specific rotations, CRIP participation, requirements placed on the residents, benefits, and student application requirements. The directory is updated on the Web throughout the process. All CPME-approved programs are listed in an interactive table that can be sorted by the column title. Each program participating in CASPR is linked to its directory page description. Hospital websites are hyperlinked from the directory page. The information in the CASPR directory is submitted and updated by each program; it is *not* verified by CASPR or CPME. Therefore, it is imperative that you ask questions to verify information on your visits and during your clerkships.

CASPR staff provides a comprehensive presentation each spring at each college regarding the CASPR process. The presentation explains the Web-based application process, designation, ranking, and match procedures. All phases are completed online through [CASPRweb.org](http://CASPRweb.org). The application asks you to list your research projects and extracurricular activities. You must also complete a personal statement, which requires you to describe why

you became interested in podiatry, your future goals, and the individual talents you will bring to a residency experience and a podiatric medical/surgical career.

CASPR will also provide you with a “Pathway to CRIP” newsletter located under “Especially for Students” on [CASPRcrip.org](http://CASPRcrip.org). The newsletter helps you to plan for your CRIP participation. Starting in September and then every month leading up to CRIP, information about hotels and scheduling your interviews will be available. When scheduling opens in December, you will create your own interview schedule online following the instructions provided under CRIP scheduling on [CASPRcrip.org](http://CASPRcrip.org). There is also the CASPR User Guide in the “Especially for Students” section ([www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/students.asp](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/students.asp)) that gives you tips and instructions in using the website throughout the CASPR cycle, including CRIP.

## **APMSA**

The [American Podiatric Medical Students' Association](http://www.apmsa.org) (APMSA) publishes the annual APMSA Residency Survey. This document provides candid, firsthand information from current podiatric medical residents about their residency program to aid students with their clerkship and residency selections. You will find information about the interview process, benefits offered, work/call schedule, types of didactic or academic activities provided, pros and cons of the program, and much more. The comments made by each of the residents are very telling and give applicants an important look into the residency program from the residents' point of view. Beware that this information is subjective and not verified. The residency survey is distributed to each podiatric medical college library and student center. For the first time in 2014, the survey featured composite data graphs and summaries and was available in a member-only secured portion of [APMSA.org](http://APMSA.org). For further information, contact Kim Vouzikas, APMSA executive assistant, at [apmsaktv@apma.org](mailto:apmsaktv@apma.org).

## **Specialty Certifying Boards**

[American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery](http://www.abfas.org) (ABFAS): ABFAS administers the examinations required for candidates to obtain board qualification and certification in foot and ankle surgery. Students are encouraged to visit [ABFAS.org](http://ABFAS.org) to download specific information and documents.

[American Board of Podiatric Medicine](http://www.abpm.org) (ABPM): ABPM offers a comprehensive board qualification and certification process in primary podiatric medicine and orthopedics. Students and residents can visit the [ABPMED.org](http://ABPMED.org) to download or view information about the process.

## **CLERKSHIPS AND PROGRAM VISITS**

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It seems as if the selection process for clerkships and residencies begins earlier each year. Some colleges offer their students many months of clerkships, while others offer fewer opportunities. The clerkship selection process is an extremely important component of the residency selection process. Many programs with clerkships select their residents only from those students who have clerked at the program. Even if clerking at the program is not a prerequisite, it provides an opportunity for you to bond with the members of the program and demonstrate your positive qualities.

Clerkships are designed to give third- and fourth-year students an opportunity to spend time, learn, and grow in a variety of clinical settings. Clerkships are academically challenging and offer an opportunity to network with future colleagues.

## **Clerkship Application Process**

Please be aware of some specific details and requirements established by AACPM:

- Usernames and passwords are sent in July to third-year students
- Online application and selections must be completed within two months
- Documents such as CV and photo are required
- Letters of recommendation are optional

Completed applications are delivered to selected programs in September. Programs then have approximately two weeks to rank students for offers. Offers go out in three rounds beginning in September of each year. You can still fill months after rounds are over. Listed below are links to obtain more information about the process:

- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/Clerkship\\_Overview-Students\\_2015.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/Clerkship_Overview-Students_2015.pdf)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/AP\\_User\\_Guide](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/AP_User_Guide)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/studentfaqs.asp](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/studentfaqs.asp)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/2015\\_Clerkship\\_Calendar.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/2015_Clerkship_Calendar.pdf)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/2015ClerkshipHandbook.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/2015ClerkshipHandbook.pdf)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/8ClerkshipDir\\_ROSTER.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/clerkships/pdf/8ClerkshipDir_ROSTER.pdf)

We recommend that you research each program carefully. All colleges have a library of information about available clerkships, and students can access that information at any time. Please refer to the [AACPM](http://www.aacpm.org) website as an additional resource. It is important to know specific requirements established by programs, both for clerkships and residency. These requirements may include GPA, class rank, publications, etc. If you do not meet the requirements, it is recommended that you not apply for the program.

It is very important to confirm and be aware of the scheduled start and end dates for each clerkship. Getting this information is imperative to determine that there is no overlap or conflict in your schedule.

The clerkship coordinator at your college and/or the chief resident at the program should both be aware of these dates so they can help you plan your schedule accordingly. You may need to ask for time, if possible, to visit other residency programs while you are clerking at a program. It's best to ask for this time in advance; do not make last-minute arrangements.

Part of the planning process involves a frank analysis of the expenses you will incur while clerking. Travel, housing, and food costs will be the biggest expenses during those months. Carefully examine your schedule and try to schedule clerkships that are close together geographically, and consecutive if possible, in order to keep travel expenses to a minimum.

Some clerkships offer housing and provide meals, while others leave you to be responsible for yourself. You may also be required to travel during the clerkship month from facility to facility, which may involve driving your own car or renting a car for the month. Make sure that you know about these expenses in advance and plan accordingly. Reliable transportation is critical when you must travel from one location to another.

The clerkship period affords you an excellent opportunity to assess the residency program, as well as giving you time to read, study, and practice for your residency interviews. It is suggested that you read articles published by the program director and other attending physicians at the program prior to your clerkship. Be willing to research information discussed each day and report on it the following day.

Because each program is different, watch and learn, especially during the first days. While some programs are highly structured, others are “follow the leader.” In some cases, residents and clerks wear scrubs all day long, and in other cases, you will be required to wear business attire and your clinic coat each day.

Every clerkship experience, whether positive or negative, should be viewed as a learning opportunity, not just a means of selecting a potential residency program. Every clerkship increases your knowledge and experience base. Make note of your experiences and how different situations were resolved, as you may want to recall details in a future interview situation.

When clerking or visiting, be personable and interact with all of the staff and the residents. Realize that visiting a program for a day may not allow you to participate in the same way as or at the same level as the students who are currently doing their clerkships there. Therefore, if you are visiting a program, you may not be permitted to go to the operating room, or you may only be allowed to observe patient care, but you should make the most of the opportunity.

When you have completed your clerkship rotation or program visit, make sure to thank all of your hosts. It is an appreciated gesture to write a thank-you letter to the director, key faculty, and residents to make sure they remember your clerkship or visit in a positive light. It will be placed in your file and referred to when your application is received.

Clerkship orientations are implemented during the spring every year between February and April to discuss the clerkship application process. Talk with your residency coordinator for more information.

If you are not planning on clerking at a particular institution but are interested in visiting the residency program, you *must* call and arrange your visit in advance. Showing up without a scheduled appointment is bad business. Call the residency director or administrative staff to set up your visit, and then send a follow-up e-mail confirming your visit date. Although far more abbreviated than a clerkship, a program visit will give you an impression of the program and help you to determine if it is a good match for you and your goals. Secondly, it will expose you to the people who will make the final decision regarding who the next resident will be. Be sure to have questions prepared in advance for the resident and for the

director. You can ask them both the same questions if you have the opportunity to do so independently. Get information about what is important to you. How many cases are performed weekly? What is the call schedule? How many residents are there at the hospital? Are there opportunities for moonlighting? What types of rotations do you participate in? Remember, this is an abbreviated visit. You need to gather as much information as possible.

## CHOOSING A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

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Begin this process with a self-assessment. Everyone knows where he or she stands academically. You know what type of person you are as well. Be honest with yourself and then begin to make choices based on your individual characteristics and priorities. If you are a middle-of-the-road student, you will need to be realistic and apply to the programs where you might be accepted. Regardless of where you stand academically, you should apply to a cross-section of programs. Never apply to only one type of program.

Check the [CASPR Directory](#) on CASPRcrip.org to make sure you do not apply to programs that select only from students who have completed clerkships at the sponsoring institution. You cannot get a refund from CASPR for this reason, so do your homework.

As mentioned earlier, APMA has compiled a wealth of residency search and [residency search and interview advice](#) from residency program directors and young physicians regarding the interview process and improving your odds at securing a residency program.

## CASPR AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The “official” application process begins in the summer before your fourth year. The CASPR schedule is published on CASPRcrip.org, and the CASPR office provides this information to the graduate placement director at your college before student orientations start between February and April. The orientation is designed to provide you with information about completing the application, the residency selection process through CASPR and CRIP, and answer any questions you may have regarding the process. It is imperative that you attend the orientation.

[CASPRweb.org](#) opens for student applications in early August. You will be e-mailed your login information to obtain access to your personal, secure application site. A status box on the home page allows you to know at a glance the status of the various parts of the application process. An information tab contains links to the CASPR User Guide as well as additional contact information and reference material. Become familiar with the rules and procedures of applying to CASPR programs and read the User Guide.

Your CASPR application requires you to write an essay, which is called the personal statement. Usually this essay is about why you want a residency program. You will need to think long and hard about how you want to compose your essay. This decision, as with many others, is yours to make, but our advice is to lean toward the more conservative side on the essay. Students may want to write poems or use creative methods to answer the essay question, which is not recommended. Write your essay in prose, just as any standard essay would be written. Regardless of how you decide to answer the essay question, you will want

to write a statement that conveys a positive message and is well written. Your essay is a reflection of you that cannot be found in any other part of the application, so it should give the message that you intend to impart. There should be no typographical errors or misspelled words. Check your grammar carefully.

You may begin designating programs as soon as the CASPR application fee is paid. Because the application process is online, you are able to edit and make adjustments to your application and designated programs until late October, at which point whatever is entered becomes final. (See the schedule at [CASPRcrip.org](http://CASPRcrip.org) for specific dates.) Only contact information can be changed after the deadline. If you miss a deadline during the residency application process, you have missed a chance for a program. Applications become available to programs around mid-November.

Several general deadline e-mail reminders will be sent prior to major deadline dates to encourage you to review your account and finalize your information. With so much flexibility, it will be important not to delay until the last minute. Set your own personal reminders to check your account status regularly. Only completed applications will be made available for programs. The responsibility lies with you.

Transcripts and clinical evaluations are uploaded directly to your account by your college. You are responsible to make sure that your college registrar or graduate placement director is authorized to upload your additional documents (transcripts, clinical evaluations, etc.) by signing the appropriate release form(s) from your school. Your college cannot upload to your application until CASPR creates the [CASPRweb.org](http://CASPRweb.org) accounts and sends all applicants their login information in August. All release forms must be signed at that time. You will not have access to view, print, or save transcripts and clinical evaluations through your online account. Make sure that you request copies for yourself from the registrar to complete your personal files.

CASPR requires you to attach a digital photo to your application. Therefore, before beginning the application process, have a professional photo taken. Wear business attire for the photo and be sure to be groomed appropriately. The photo will help the residency interviewers remember you during the interview process, so make sure that your photo is truly representative of the way you want to present yourself during the interview process. You will upload this photo along with letters of recommendation and other documents such as a published article or research abstract that may be required by a program. All programs will have access to all of the documents in your file regardless of the program's individual requirements. Any documentation beyond the space provided or any individual program fees must be mailed directly to the program by the November deadline date. It is wise to store a digital copy of your entire application in another location on your computer as well as to print a hard copy for your files. It is also a good idea to bring a copy of your application to any interviews to refer to as necessary.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

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Your curriculum vitae (CV) or resume is a vital link between you and the residency programs. Many programs rely heavily on this document because it not only indicates your previous education and experience, but it also can be a window into your work habits and attention to detail. While preparing your CV can seem like a cumbersome task, it can be easily accomplished in many ways. The general rules of thumb listed below can be followed to ensure your CV sends the right message.

Try to get your hands on a number of sample CVs. Your college's clerkship office or library may have samples available. If not, obtain CVs from students you respect in the class ahead of you or current practitioners. These materials can be used for ideas, but should not, of course, be copied.

Information that must be included in a carefully prepared CV:

- Personal information including:
  - Full name
  - Address and phone numbers
  - E-mail address
- Educational information including:
  - Podiatric medical school and location with anticipated date of graduation
  - Undergraduate education: institution, location, degree, and dates
  - Awards received
  - Honors achieved
  - Memberships
- Work experience including:
  - Names and locations of employers
  - Dates of employment and job titles
  - Duties and special projects (as necessary)
- References:
  - Either listed or stated as "available upon request"

Optional information includes:

- Publications written or in progress, licensure(s), certifications, languages spoken, goals and objectives

The presentation of your CV is vital. Carefully proofread your document for misspelled words or typographical errors. Remember that the CV is the one document that the residency director can use to get your background "at a glance."

## Recommendation Letters

Letters of recommendation are important for some programs and completely disregarded by others. Nevertheless, it is important to arrange for at least three letters of recommendation. Keep in mind that letters of recommendation should include:

- the date;
- a generic salutation;

- a reference line with your name;
- signer's title or position; and
- the signature of the letter writer.

As you might imagine, many of your clinical instructors are inundated with requests for recommendation letters from fourth-year students. Many of these instructors have sample letters in their computers, and they plug in names and send them out in bulk. This situation is obviously not ideal—a standardized letter does you no good with the programs that actually use them. Therefore, you should look for people who can personalize their message to write your recommendation letters.

If you have been mentored by a podiatrist, or if you have spent time in someone's office, you can ask that doctor for a letter. If you have an employer or colleague who is particularly aware of your achievements and goals, you can ask this person. The point is that you should search for at least one “out of the ordinary” recommendation letter so that something memorable stands out about your letters. It is important to get a wide range of letters. The letter writer may prefer to send the letter directly to CASPR to scan and upload. However, you will have access to it as part of your application file and have the option to delete it from your account if you wish.

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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All of the rules outlined in this document for interviewing apply regardless of whether the interview is a formal one-on-one interview at a CRIP site, a hastily arranged meeting at the hospital, or a scheduled interview during your clerkship. Everything you've heard about first impressions is true—and then some.

### **Centralized Residency Interview Program (CRIP)**

CRIP scheduling online is available on CASPRweb.org around mid-December for all sections. Scheduling guidelines are provided. Each participating program establishes a grid of available interview times. As those times are filled, the blocks are shaded in without names, allowing you to rearrange your schedule as needed up until late December when scheduling ends. You are able to save and print a draft CRIP schedule as needed. A final schedule is provided at CRIP registration upon sign-in.

Residency directors receive a list of applicants and indicate “yes” or “no” to indicate which students they wish to interview. As directors grant or deny an interview on their CASPRweb.org account, you will see their response in the “CRIP Interview Granted” column under the “My Programs” tab. Once an interview is granted, it cannot be withdrawn. An empty box indicates no decision has yet been made. Programs can continue to grant interviews up until the weekend before CRIP, so you will want to return to your site frequently.

All interview times are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. You should be flexible with your schedule to make sure you can interview with all of the programs you are interested in. One of the guidelines for scheduling your interviews requires you to allow 30

minutes between each interview. Experience has shown that this 30-minute buffer allows for some breathing time between interviews and accommodates any possible delays. As you might imagine, with hundreds of students interviewing all at once, there are always some hang-ups in the scheduling.

It is impossible to interview with 20 programs in one day. Students who apply to multiple programs find themselves in a quandary when they try to schedule too many interviews. Interviews normally begin at 8:00–9:00 a.m. and run until 5:00–7:00 p.m. There are only so many hours in a day, and with interviews lasting a minimum of 20 minutes, program directors can only interview a limited number of applicants. Therefore, you need to pick and choose once you know who has granted you an interview. This process may serve as a time to reassess your goals and objectives.

There can be times when you are unable to attend an interview, or when you must cancel. If you schedule an interview and decide not to attend, you must cancel your interview time before the CRIP scheduling deadline. You can cancel by following the directions provided by the CASPR office. Often, scheduling adjustments can be made to help other students in this case. It is inappropriate to skip an interview without notifying the CRIP staff and the program director. Remember that most residency programs are trying hard to make sure that applicants are treated fairly and that the process is equitable. You should do your best to extend this same courtesy to the programs when you need to cancel or decline a specific interview.

## **DRESSING THE PART**

In an interview, it is essential to make a good first impression. It is not uncommon for the interviewers to remember you by your attire, your hair, or your general appearance.

There is only one way to appear during interviews: clean and dressed in professional business attire (suits for men and women).

The main rule of thumb for all interview sessions is that conservative is better. Think like the residency director and dress accordingly.

## **ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTERVIEWS**

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Social interviews are no less important than academic interviews. While these interviews may seem somewhat less formal than academic interviews, do not be deceived. Often during social interviews, the director asks questions to determine your philosophies, ethics, and morality.

As with any academic interview, think before you answer. With social questions, there are usually no right or wrong answers. The doctor is merely trying to determine if you would be a good match for his or her program. Answer honestly, and your success rate will be better. If you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question, tell the director. Sometimes, the interview process is designed to “push your buttons” or to make you feel uncomfortable to see how you react in that situation.

Additionally, prepare and rehearse a 30-second elevator speech. Make it informative and professional, and use it as an opportunity to make yourself stand out.

Most of your interviews will be a combination of academic and social. Despite viewing your transcripts, clinical evaluations, and American Podiatric Medical Licensing Exam (APMLE) results, most programs still want to quiz you to determine your academic abilities. The questions likely will be a combination of easy and difficult.

The amount of studying you do will depend on your clerkships, your schedule, and your inclinations. Usually, your college will provide you with study guides, sample interview questions, and mock interview opportunities. You should participate and collect as much information as possible in order to be prepared for all scenarios. Practice makes perfect in this case. Participating in mock interviews gets most students' nerves under control and gives them a taste of the real thing.

Sometimes, interviewers ask questions you may consider inappropriate or unacceptable. You are within your rights at all times to refuse to answer such questions. A list of some of these types of questions is available at the CRIP site. They are also listed in the CASPR User Guide. Still, you should prepare yourself in advance and be ready to reply to these questions. Interviewers are not allowed to ask about the following topics: your religion, political beliefs/affiliations, ancestry, national origin, native language, sexual orientation, marital status, spouse, spouse's occupation, birthplace, age, date of birth, ages of your children, or family planning. If you volunteer any of this information, interviewers can ask you to clarify, so do not open this door. If you are asked a question you believe is inappropriate, it is within your rights to answer, "I don't feel comfortable answering that question."

### **Acceptable versus Unacceptable Questions**

1. It is unacceptable to ask if you are a US citizen. It is acceptable to ask if you are lawfully employable in the United States.
2. It is unacceptable to ask if you have any children; it is acceptable to ask if you would be willing to relocate.
3. It is unacceptable to ask if you smoke. It is acceptable to outline the smoking policy at the hospital or the residency program.
4. An interviewer may not ask about your religion, church, synagogue, parish, the religious holidays you observe, or your political beliefs or affiliations. Interviewers cannot ask, "Does your religion allow you to work on Saturdays?" It is acceptable to ask something like, "The job requires that you work on Saturday; is that a problem?"
5. An interviewer may ask how you would like to be addressed. It is not acceptable to ask about your maiden name, marital status, number of children, or spouse's occupation.

Listen to the names of the members of the interview team. If you feel comfortable, repeat them. Also, listen carefully to the questions. It is important to understand the questions fully before you answer so you answer the right question. If you don't understand or remember part of the question, or more importantly, if you don't hear the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it. It is perfectly acceptable to have a question repeated.

Be personable, but not too personal. The interviewers are looking to determine your thought process. They want to hear how you work out a problem. Take your time and think about your answers. Because everyone speaks the language of academics, it is more than likely that some portion of your interview will be academic regardless of your class standing. It is very obvious to interviewers when an applicant is prepared and confident.

Many residency programs are moving toward interview techniques that allow them to determine your ability to work as a team member. Performance-based interviewing is a type of assessment that focuses on the ability of the candidate to deal with real-life situations related to their relationships with supervisors, coworkers, and/or subordinates. These questions ask the candidate to answer questions about relationships based on how they may have dealt with similar circumstances in the past. For example, if the program has several residents and wants its residents to be team players, interviewers may ask applicants, "Give an example of how you worked with another individual or group of individuals to get a job or task completed. What obstacle(s) did you have to overcome to get the job completed?"

It is advised that you ask your clerkship office whether it has sample residency interview questions to assist in your interview preparation. Work with your fellow students to practice interviewing skills. Many students have found that videotaping their practice sessions is an effective way to evaluate interviewing skills. You will see things on a videotape that you would not otherwise realize that you're doing. For example, you may not realize that you twirl your hair or purse your lips when you're nervous. These actions will be very distracting to anyone interviewing you. Watch your body language. Be sure you sit up straight, speak clearly, and do not give any inappropriate signals. Nervousness manifests itself in lots of different ways. Try not to be the type of interviewee who gives off the wrong signals.

A great deal has been written in the past 40 years on nonverbal communication. You have probably heard some of the stories of applicants who inadvertently twitch their noses, wiggle constantly, or sniff during the interview process. We all send out nonverbal cues every day, in every personal interaction we have. Nevertheless, it is imperative that you reduce as many negative nonverbal cues as possible.

Listed below are a few of the more obvious (and most often seen) nonverbal problems:

1. Any type of fidgeting is distracting to the interviewers and will detract from what you are saying, regardless of how brilliant it might be. Rest your hands in your lap.

2. Eye contact is very important. Looking someone in the eye lets him or her know that you are confident, both in yourself and your answer. If there is more than one interviewer, be sure to include all of the interviewers in your eye contact. Sweeping back and forth engages each of them.
3. A firm handshake is critical. If your hands are sweaty (and whose aren't during stressful times?), bring along a handkerchief to wipe them off prior to shaking hands.
4. Attitude shows through. Stand up straight, walk with purpose, and smile!

Remember that there are many, many different ways to relax. Find your best method and use it as necessary.

## COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Listed below are some commonly asked questions provided by residency directors and applicants. This list is not complete, but it should get you off on the right foot when preparing for the interview process.

### **Social Questions**

1. Why did you choose podiatric medicine? Why did you choose your particular college? What do you like most and least about your podiatry school?
2. What are you looking for in a residency program?
3. What can you offer us? What do you know about our program? Who is the director of our program? What can you add to our program? Why did you apply to this program?
4. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Give us three words that specifically describe you.
5. Why should we choose you as our resident?
6. Tell us about your clerkship experiences. What was the best part of your clerkship? What was the worst part? What would you like to see changed?
7. What did you see of particular interest during your clerkships?
8. In what extracurricular programs do you participate? Which was your favorite, and why?
9. What other types of programs have you applied to? Why did you apply to those particular programs?

10. What did you do prior to entering podiatric medical school?
11. What do you see yourself doing in five years? Ten years? Fifteen years? What are your professional and personal goals?
12. Tell us your favorite joke?
13. Tell us about the most positive experience you've had in podiatric medicine.
14. Who is your hero, and why?
15. Would you rather work in a small community hospital or a large urban hospital? Why?
16. What was the last book (novel) you read? Who was the author?
17. Do you read the newspaper every day? What news story is currently the most interesting?
18. What is your favorite subject in school? Why?
19. What do you want to tell us about yourself?
20. What do you think about [clinician at school]? (Note: Always be positive!)
21. Who is your favorite clinician? Who would you most like to emulate? Who is your least favorite?
22. Who is your favorite celebrity, and why?
23. How would you add or contribute to our program?
24. What is the most important problem in podiatry today? How can you help to solve that problem or make it better?
25. How do you feel about other medical specialties? Orthopedists?
26. Where would you like to practice, and why?
27. What type of practice would you like to have? What's your idea of the ideal practice?
28. Tell us more about a particular part of your CV. Why did you decide to list that? You listed a research project on your CV. Tell us about your research.
29. Do you consider yourself ethical? Give an example.

30. What do you do in your spare time?
31. What is your biggest accomplishment in life?
32. If you weren't in podiatry, what would you be doing instead?
33. What do you think is lacking in most podiatric residencies? What improvements do you think the profession should make in residencies?

### **Academic Questions**

Almost every academic interview includes case presentations. Make sure you process the information as you have been taught. In other words, ask appropriate historical and physical examination questions, order appropriate tests, and give both conservative and surgical treatment plans as indicated. Be ready to defend your choices. Be sure you know your antibiotics. Know dosages for adults and children.

1. Name joint-destructive versus joint-preserving procedures for correction of HAV.
2. What are the differences between a cancellous and cortical screw?
3. List soft tissue versus osseous procedures for cavus versus flat foot.
4. What are the steps of sequential reduction of a hammertoe?
5. What are some of the reasons for a postoperative fever?
6. How do you handle postoperative complications of white toe? Blue toe? Fever?
7. Between which layers do the medial and lateral plantar nerves lie?
8. How many bones are there in the foot? How many joints?
9. Name 10 NSAIDs and their doses.
10. What is the toxic dose of ibuprofen?
11. What antibiotics do you use against MRSA? Which oral agents can you use against MRSA? Topical?
12. What happens when you give Vancomycin too fast?
13. What do you give to a patient who is allergic to penicillin to treat a staph infection?
14. What do you do for anesthesia if the patient is allergic to all local anesthetics and you are doing a nail avulsion?
15. How do you treat malignant hyperthermia?

16. What are the most common locations of talar dome lesions and their mechanism of injury?
17. What is the difference between a Chem 6 and a Chem 7 profile?
18. Give five etiologies of hallux limitus.
19. What is the difference between primary and secondary bone healing?
20. What are the classifications of fractures of the ankle?
21. Describe the dermatome patterns of the lower extremity.
22. How can you differentiate between osteomyelitis and nonunion?
23. Differentiate biomechanically the difference between hallux limitus formation and HAV information.
24. What is the most common organism cultured from an infected skin graft?
25. What is the triad of Reiter's syndrome?
26. What would you do for a tibialis posterior tendon rupture?
27. Name some gram (+) organisms and gram (-) organisms.
28. What is Sever's disease? Age group? Treatment?
29. What is a Heyman, Herdon, Strong procedure?
30. What are the conservative treatments for heel spurs?
31. What are the various surgical procedures for heel spur?
32. How would you diagnose a DVT?
33. What are the classifications for ankle fractures?

### **Tips for Answering Questions**

1. Whenever you are asked to make a negative comment, find a way to turn it into a positive one. For example, if you are asked to describe your weaknesses, you can say, "I have some trouble with my organizational skills, but I've been working hard on this area for the past year, and I can really see an improvement."

2. Don't talk about what you don't know. Lies are very obvious.
3. Have questions about the residency program prepared in advance. Do your homework. Do not ask questions of the interviewers that seek information you could find in any publication or online. If you do your research in advance, you will be able to ask good questions during the interview; your preparation shows your interest in the program. Do not go into any residency interview cold.
4. When presented with an X-ray, it is appropriate to get up from your chair to take a closer look. Make sure the X-ray is displayed correctly. Ask questions as necessary.
5. When presented with a case study, feel free to ask questions about the X-rays or information that you were handed. Often residency program directors do not give you all of the appropriate information. They are waiting for you to ask the right questions.
6. During case study presentations, work up the case as if it were a real patient; order your tests, prepare a differential diagnosis, and schedule your treatment plan. The program is usually looking for your thought process. Now is the time to demonstrate that you are logical and have a sound clinical background.
7. Remember that many questions are asked merely to gauge your reaction. If you come to a question that is difficult morally or ethically, think first and then answer. You want to always give a positive slant to your answer.
8. Never talk negatively about people or programs. Podiatry is a small profession, and many of the doctors know one another. Even if your experiences at a particular clerkship were not good, find a few good things to talk about regardless.
9. "I don't know" is an appropriate answer to any academic question. If you don't know the answer, it is better to admit it and get onto the next question. Trying to guess or pretend you know is always much worse than admitting that you don't know. It is truly impossible to know everything. You may choose to say, "I'd have to look that up because I'm just not sure."
10. When the interview is over, remember to thank the interviewers and shake their hands. You may also ask whom to contact if you have any further questions.

## **BUYER BEWARE**

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In the past, some applicants have not been aware of the approval status of residency programs. Problems have ranged from minor paperwork issues to programs that disband just after the CASPR match. As an applicant, you must do the necessary amount of research to determine which programs may have problems. You do not want to begin a

residency program that is experiencing significant problems with its approval.

CPME has established specific requirements for approval of programs, including rules regarding such issues as notification of program status, curriculum requirements, documentation requirements, and duties of the program director. All programs are responsible for following these requirements. CPME requires that programs inform applicants in writing if the program holds probationary approval, or has had approval withheld or withdrawn. *It is your responsibility to determine the status of a program you are going to accept.* You may contact CPME to ask about the number of approved positions a hospital has, and whether the program is in either provisional or probationary status or has been approved. When in doubt, make that call. It may determine whether you begin a viable program or get yourself into a load of trouble.

## CASPR RANKING

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After the interview process is over, programs and applicants go to their CASPR accounts to rank their choices in order of preference. An explanation of how the match works is available at [CASPRcrip.org](http://CASPRcrip.org). Although this explanation does not cover every match possibility, it does provide a basic understanding of the match logarithm. It is an extremely complicated process, but suffice it to say that the match works usually in favor of the student.

Attempting to second-guess the match process is not advisable. During and after the interview process, many programs will tell you that they found you to be an outstanding candidate for their program. They may even tell you that they will be ranking you highly. If you choose to believe these comments, you may also choose to let them affect your ranking. But once again, you must be wary. It is possible that these programs may be telling many applicants the same story to increase their chances of matching with one of their top choices. Nevertheless, that program may not be one of your top choices, so if you change your ranking, you may lose your opportunity to match with a program that you liked more. *The best advice is to rank in order of your true preference.*

As stated, the match works in favor of the student. If you rank a program No. 10, and they rank you No. 1, that program will not match until after you do. That means that unless you get your first, second, third, etc., choice through your 10th choice, that program will not match until after you have matched. The program will be on “hold” until you matched with one of your choices one through nine or you match with the program you ranked No. 10.

## CASPR MATCH DAY

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Match results will be available on your [CASPRweb.org](http://CASPRweb.org) account at 11:00 a.m. on the first day of match week. Check the schedule for specific dates.

Listed below are links that provide more information regarding the match and unfilled positions after the match:

- [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP\\_Instructions/MatchMatch.aspx](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP_Instructions/MatchMatch.aspx)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP\\_Instructions/MatchUnfilledPos.aspx](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP_Instructions/MatchUnfilledPos.aspx)

## **MATCH PROCESS II**

Every March, Match Process II (MP II) will be accessible for unmatched students and unfilled positions.

For a general overview of MP II, visit the links below:

- [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP\\_Instructions/MatchScramble.aspx](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/AP_Instructions/MatchScramble.aspx)
- [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/MPIIProjectOverview.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/MPIIProjectOverview.pdf)

A calendar specifically for applicants is available at [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/STUSCHED.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/STUSCHED.pdf).

A calendar specifically for programs is available at [www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/ProgSched.pdf](http://www.casprcrip.org/html/casprcrip/pdf/ProgSched.pdf).

## **CONCLUSION**

The suggestions that are incorporated in this guide were gathered from numerous resources. Essentially, it is advice that reflects a great deal of background and experience. And, as with all advice, it is prudent that you determine what strategies will be most effective for you.

The process of selecting a residency can be one of the greatest challenges you will face in your career as a podiatrist. You will find it often frustrating, sometimes difficult, and always demanding. In addition, heed the advice you receive from the professionals at your college, and listen carefully to the suggestions made by students who graduated before you. With so much advice and good intentions coming your way, your opportunities for success will be that much greater.

**Best of luck to you in your search for a podiatric residency position!**

**DISCLAIMER**

It is almost impossible to anticipate every clerkship or residency interview situation. This document only provides suggestions and recommendations that you may utilize at your discretion.

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