



2025 Road to Residency Webinar 3

Signals & Geographic Preferences

With 20 signals this cycle, I feel the value of each individual signal is somewhat diluted. At the same time, not signaling a program might be perceived as a lack of genuine interest. Do your programs still offer interviews to applicants who don't signal?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): I think that your perspective on this is valid. The honest answer is that I'm not sure how the change from 8 to 20 signals is going to influence interview likelihood. Last year there was around a 10-15% interview rate for non-signaled applicants. My guess is that the percentage will be lower, but I'm not sure by how much. We have interviewed non-signaled applicants every year and actually have matched one as well.

Also considering the 20 signals, are programs adjusting the % and/or total # of interviews offered from their applicant pool?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): We plan to conduct the same number of interviews as we have every year. I can't speak for all programs but we tend to look at how many interview days we want to have, number of interviews per day, as opposed to a quota/percentage of total applications we receive.

Do programs use geographic preferences to help determine whether or not to offer an interview?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): Geographic preference I think will take a back seat to signaling this year, is at least my guess.

Ashlee Bolger: 100% agree :)

Letters of Recommendation

For programs that require 1–2 letters of recommendation from a physiatrist, will not having them automatically disqualify your application?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): We recognize that some of us (myself included) struggle to meet deadlines, so at least for me it isn't a disqualification. If there isn't a letter after some passage of time that can be a problem, but I have reached out to applicants in the past if letters are



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missing. It may be a reason that an applicant misses the first wave of invitations but certainly wouldn't cause them to miss out on the second wave if the letters were in by that time.

Ashlee Bolger: I personally think it will be really hard to get an interview with no PMR LOR but if you found PMR late and have a late PMR rotation I would be transparent about that in your personal statement (otherwise I personally assume other things that may or may not be true).

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): Agree - if it is an issue of the letter isn't in on the first day of review because the letter writer is procrastinating, don't sweat that too much!

Regarding ERAS, does a SLOE count toward the total of 3 letters of recommendation most programs list as a maximum, or is it viewed in addition to the 3 historical narrative letters? Out of the narrative letters needed for ERAS how many would you recommend to be from physiatrists?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): SLOE would count as one of the letters, at least in my perspective. I think 2 PM&R letters would be ideal (one or two could be SLOE but aren't required). Programs often list in their requirements how many letters they are requiring and what specialties.

Ashlee Bolger: Included in the total typically (i.e. meant to replace a traditional PMR LOR)

Would you recommend submitting a letter of recommendation from an away rotation in a the same geographic region if it was not at that specific school? Example: if I am a med student in the West Coast and rotated at X school in Chicago, would other Chicago/midwest programs like to see a letter from X school? Or does it not matter?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): I think it's far more about the quality of the letter and the content as opposed to the location of the letter writer. I would say to go with the four best letters that are going to speak to your abilities best. Having a letter from an internist who spent 3 weeks with you probably speaks more than a PM&R letter from someone who worked with you for a day.



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Other Topics

With PM&R becoming so competitive, are you able to touch on what really separates the applicant in an interview who will be ranked highly and likely to match vs the applicant who falls into the larger cohort that didn't have a bad application necessarily but who will not compelling enough to be ranked to match?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): That's a challenging question to answer and there is no really exact answer. One of the things that I look for is what is the applicant's journey to the specialty, are they looking for aspects in a program (setting, rotation experiences, interests) that is a good match for what our strengths are, and does the interview come off as being comfortable and confident, polished without being overly rehearsed. We are really looking to see whether your personal interests and mission are aligned with our program's.

Ashlee Bolger: I think this is probably different for everyone (even as our group reviewing applications we don't exactly have the same thing that stands out to each of us). I personally tend to gravitate towards leadership positions that are over years or were a large commitment.

For nontrad applicants that have already taken STEP3, how does the score get viewed since other applicants may not have taken it yet?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): Step 3 is a challenging one, because it is a data point that we don't have for all applicants. I think the application in whole will matter more than the step 3 score (good or bad).

Ashlee Bolger: I personally don't put too much stock in it (Even less than step 2). Not entirely sure if this is true across PDs though.

Do most programs have a cut off score that they are looking for in terms of board scores? (Besides the minimum passing score)

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): Some programs do have a cutoff, although I think it is a bit less commonly encountered in PMR than other specialties. Some may post that cutoff, but not all do



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What do you all think about reapplying to programs as a reapplicant who you interviewed at last year? Do you feel that there are some programs who would not be open to your application?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): I think that it is going to depend on what were the potential reasons that you didn't match or match to that program. We have had applicants who didn't match who we were surprised they didn't match, those certainly I would encourage to re-apply to our program and to other programs.

Ashlee Bolger: If you liked the program I'd reapply. It may have just been the bad luck that you didn't match. Maybe you were one past where they matched on their match list.

For the experiences section of the ERAS application, do most application reviewers prefer to read bullet points outlining the main responsibilities/details of that experience (like in a traditional CV)? Compared to the three meaningful experiences narratives, which is designed to be more narrative form, describing what the experience meant to the applicant?

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): I think you'll find PDs have different preferences on prose vs bullet points. Personally I feel like bullet points are much easier to read in the application format so I prefer that but certainly don't hold that preference against someone who writes in prose.

For IMGs, not applying straight out of med school and not having a home Psychiatry department, what are some good options that they have. Whether its doing research in a field in related to Psychiatry so you can tailor your projects somewhat related to PMNR or doing intern year in their country.

Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): I think that doing research in a field that is related is a good way to get PM&R relevant research experience. The thing that I'm looking more into with the research is the role that you held in the project, because coming in to residency with research skills would allow you to better navigate your own project during training. So while the content is important, if it is PM&R adjacent, the extent to which you participated and led the project is just as important, if not more so.

What is your best advice for not sounding rehearsed when you are saying very similar answers in your interviews?



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Adam Lamm (Mary Free Bed): This is a really hard line to walk. I think a lot of it is about having themes to the answers (almost like bullet points) as opposed to an exact answer that you want to say.