

International Medical Graduate and the United States Medical Residency Application

A Guide to Achieving Success

Raghav Govindarajan
Sachin M. Bhagavan
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*Dedicated to our parents for
their constant motivation and
support, without which this
book would not have been
possible!*

Preface

Having an opportunity to train in United States is a dream for many medical students from all over the world. And why not? The availability of latest technology along with world-class faculty sets your heart racing. The professional satisfaction you get from practicing here in United States is incredible. At the same time, getting into US residency is not easy, and the competition has been increasing every year. For international medical graduates, it is even more daunting. Candidates from all over the world apply for residency and the number of residency spots has not kept up with the number of applicants which significantly increases competition.

Unlike residency application in many countries where the focus is only on test scores, US residency application is multi-step process with test scores being a small component of the entire application. It is this complexity and lack of understanding that makes the application challenging. This journey will test your patience, character and is an expensive process.

To remain focused for this journey, you need adequate information about the various stages of application and means and methods to address them. This book, *International Medical Graduate and the United States Medical Residency Application: A Guide to Achieving Success*, tries to capture the essence of this journey by providing you a glimpse of how your journey should be planned, from writing of USMLE examinations to applying for residency to preparing and acing your interviews.

The book is easy to read, very concise, and crisp, highlighting only what is absolutely important, and has answers to

some of the most frequent questions that come during this journey. This is a small effort by the authors and editors who have gone through this long journey themselves and have come out successful and can impart their experiences and shine light on the pitfalls and ways to avoid them for a smooth journey! The book has many tables, figures, and flow charts which makes it easy to read. The book is pocket-sized and can easily fit in your interview jacket or your carry-on bag.

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Part I

Pre-interview

Chapter 1

What Does US Residency Application Consist Of?



Swathi Beladakere Ramaswamy

Know your opponent and you will never lose ~Anonymous

US residency is the training you get after your basic medical degree. Candidates who finish their medical school in the US as well as from outside can get into this training. International medical graduate (IMG) is a physician who received a basic medical degree from a medical school located outside of the USA and Canada that is not accredited by a US accrediting body or the Liaison Committee on Medical Education or the American Osteopathic Association. It is the location/accreditation of the medical school and not the citizenship of the physician that determines whether the graduate is an IMG. Thus, individuals who are US citizens when they graduate from an international medical school are US IMGs, and individuals who are not US citizens at the time of medical school graduation are non-US IMGs even if they later become US citizens. Non-US citizens who graduated from medical schools in the USA and Canada are not considered IMGs.

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Filling out the residency application (known as MyERAS application) is the last step of the process, but knowing the requirements of application well before you start planning and preparing toward procuring a US residency spot is very crucial. This is because it is this application that actually reflects your achievements, persona and your work toward it. It is this application that paves way to the second part of scrutiny that is interviews. It is a concern that if you don't meet all the requirements within the stipulated time line, it reduces your chance of matching that year and in the coming years as you tend to become older graduate every passing year.

There are certain things that are absolutely necessary before applying, and there are a few things that make the application stand out. A great application is possible with good planning, pure hard work, and clear sense of time line.

List of Various Sections in MyERAS Application

- General Information
- Medical Licensure
- Medical Education
- Medical School Honors/Awards
- Membership in Honorary/Professional Societies
- Experience—Work/Volunteer/Research
- Publications
- Language Fluency
- Hobbies and Interest
- Other Awards/Accomplishments

This application is complete only when it is enclosed with ECFMG certificate (of course! with decent scores), excellent personal statement, curriculum vitae, and three or four personalized letters of recommendation.

Application Tips

- Present the application neatly and free of grammar and spelling errors. All applications should be original.
- Highlight any unique qualifications, academic experiences and volunteer work and test scores on the curriculum vitae.
- Gain experience in a US healthcare facility before applying to a residency to assist in getting a strong letter of recommendation. While letters of recommendation from overseas schools are important, they are not comparable to US schools.
- Ensure the application is filled out correctly, including your NRMP applicant number if you are registered for The Match.
- Write a personal statement that addresses your unique abilities as an applicant.
- Be prepared to answer questions pertaining to your immigration status and visa status if you are a non-US citizen.

Keeping the above requirements in mind efforts to build an outstanding profile that should begin very early in the training; it wouldn't be wrong to say from 1st year of medical school but no later than 3rd year of medical school.

The question as to how to achieve this will be answered in a stepwise manner as you advance through this book

Chapter 2

How Competitive Is US Residency Application?



Swathi Beladakere Ramaswamy and Sachin M. Bhagavan

The best part of competition is that through it we discover what we are capable of, and how much more we can actually do than we ever believed possible ~Anonymous

Over the years, getting into US residency has become more and more competitive. There are various factors that play a role into it. Let's look at various factors that can explain the competitiveness. For our simplicity here, US graduates would mean those who have graduated in US and Canadian schools, and this comprises seniors of US Allopathic School, previous graduates of US Allopathic School, students/graduates of Osteopathic Medical School, and students/graduates of Canadian Medical School. Foreign graduates would mean US IMG and non-US IMG comprising US citizens and non-US

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citizens who graduated in medical school outside the USA, respectively.

As you can see in Fig. 2.1, there is a steady increase in the number of residency positions every year, but at the same time, the number of US graduates who apply has also increased proportionally. This is because of increase in medical students who graduate in medical school every year which then adds to the applicant pool. While foreign graduates have remained fairly stable and show a slight declining trend because of increasing US graduates, there has been a drastic change in dynamics regarding obtaining appropriate visa for clinical rotation, interviews and residency, and selection of specialty, which further enhances the difficulty for IMGs.

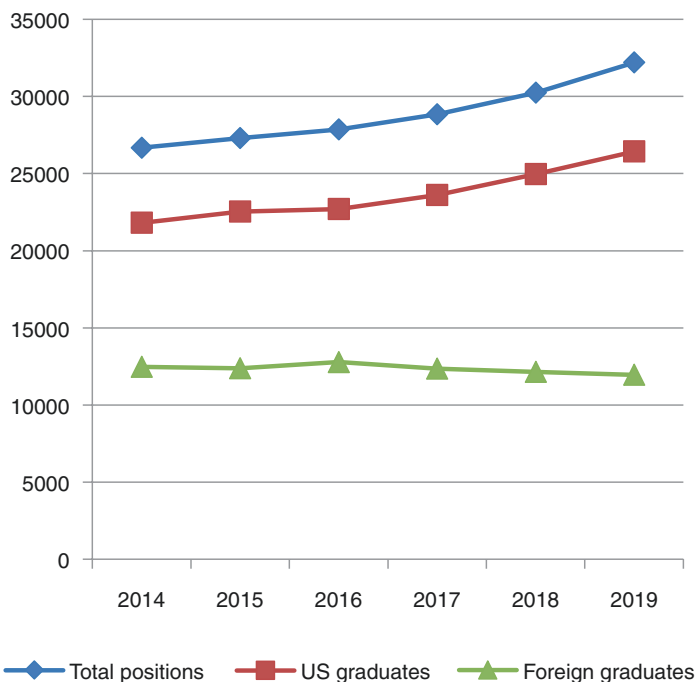


FIGURE 2.1 Trend in number of positions and participation of US and foreign graduates over the years [1]

As shown in Fig. 2.2, match percentage for year 2019, 38,376 candidates participated in match for a total of 32,194 positions. 69% were US graduates, 13% comprised of US IMG, and non-US IMG held a share of 18%.

When it comes to match percentage, US graduates have a fairly stable match percentage of around 94%, i.e., 94% of US graduates every year get matched into residency programs. When it comes to foreign graduates, there has been a steady increase in match percentages for both US and non-US IMG, with 2019 recording the highest match percentage so far with 59% and 58.6%, respectively, as seen in Fig. 2.3. Increase in residency position does play a role, but studies have found that foreign graduates who were successful in matching to their preferred specialty had ranked more programs within their preferred specialty, had higher USMLE steps score, were involved in publication/participation in research projects, and had some experience in the USA (in form of observership or clerkship). US IMG have a slightly higher match rate than non-US IMG. Therefore for having a higher chance of successful match, it is important to emphasize on early planning and building your profile.

One more factor for an IMG to consider before applying is the competitiveness of the specialty and match rates for

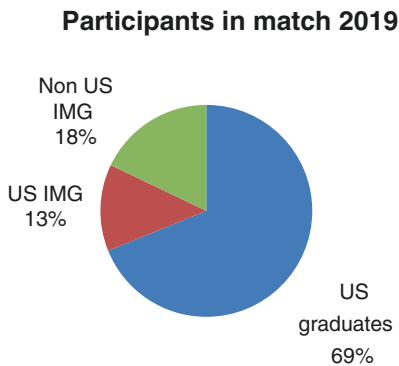


FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of participants from three main categories in 2019