

DERMATOLOGY RESIDENCY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SPECIALTY OVERVIEW:

Dermatology is a unique field consisting of studying all areas of the skin, including skin, hair, and nails. It includes treatment of acne, warts, rashes, reactions to medications, manifestations of internal diseases, skin cancer, and much more.

DERMATOLOGY TRAINING:

Dermatology residency is 3 years, following a one year internship in a field of your choice, usually internal medicine or surgery.

SUBSPECIALTIES:

Subspecialties of dermatology include dermatopathology, dermatosurgery, pediatric dermatology, contact dermatitis, and cosmetic dermatology. Fellowships are required after residency and the length varies according to the subspecialty.

COMPETITIVENESS:

Dermatology is a very competitive residency program. In some years, it has been considered the most difficult residency to obtain, but this is not the case every year. The competitiveness of the Texas Tech program depends on several factors including how many qualified applicants from Texas Tech are applying and how many qualified rotating applicants from other schools we have had.

STEP SCORES:

Most programs have a screening process before they grant interviews and this often involves board scores. The cutoff varies but students should aim for scores above 220 in order to make the cutoff. In many cases, the higher score, the more likely an interview is to be granted.

STEP EXAM FAILURES:

Failing Step 1 will likely prevent any interviews from outside schools. If you rotated at the Tech Dermatology Program, you may still get an interview, but realistically, a failure limits the chance of a successful match dramatically.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Research experience at the Texas Tech Dermatology Department can be helpful in your application. It can supplement good board scores and AOA and truly make an outstanding application and increase your chances of getting in. It can sometimes help a more average applicant to obtain a residency position, but the research would need to be very impressive to overcome lack of good board scores and grades.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS:

Involvement in organizations will also help the application, especially to be involved in the Dermatology Interest Group. AOA, or the Medical Student Honor Society Alpha Omega Alpha, will consider extracurricular activities in their selection process. These activities should not take the place of high grades and test scores but they can help supplement the application.

TOP PROGRAMS:

Top programs vary considerably over the nation and according to whom you ask. Wake Forest, Duke, UCLA, and a variety of others are considered strong across the nation. Regional programs are considered strong in different aspects. Texas Tech is well known for the strong surgical experience while Southwestern is more research oriented.

NUMBER OF PROGRAMS TO APPLY:

You should apply to as many programs as you can and this is generally easy given the computer program. You may select to stay in a certain area of the country but to increase your chances of

getting an interview, apply widely. Programs often pick applicants who are in a similar geographic area so you should apply to all regional programs.

PROGRAM DIRECTORS:

Program directors are looking for applicants who have high board scores, belong to AOA, have participated in writing a case report or other research project with their home school dermatology department, relevant extracurricular or student volunteer activities, strong letters of recommendation from their home school dermatology department, and a well thought out personal statement.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

Letters of rec should come from the home school dermatology department, ideally from the chairman AND another faculty that the student has worked closely with. Letters can also come from dermatologists at other academic institutions where the student has rotated. Letters from outside specialties or from private practice dermatologists are not as strongly considered.

ELECTIVES:

Outside electives or rotations at other academic institutions can be helpful to increase the chance of the student matching. The student should pick another program or 2 of interest and plan a 2 week or one month rotation. This can be very helpful if the student does a great job and impresses them, but a bad impression will likely result in no match at that program. Rotations at non dermatology specialties or with private practice dermatologists are not as helpful because you are not working directly with the faculty and residents you are trying to impress.

PREPARATION:

The best preparation for this residency during the early years of medical school is to do well in school, get honors type grades, and excellent board scores. The ideal applicant would then work on a case report to publish with our department and rotate through our department, all before the application begins. This will help you to match at Texas Tech greatly and will also increase your chances of receiving invitations to interview at other schools. We encourage anyone who is interested in pursuing a career in dermatology to come by the department and meet with one of the faculty to get you headed in the right direction.