

INTERNAL MEDICINE RESIDENCY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. SPECIALTY OVERVIEW.

Internists have comprehensive training in adult medical disorders. Their training involves patient care in both ambulatory clinics settings and in hospital settings. They manage patients with acute and chronic medical problems. The disease complexity ranges from very simple to quite complex with multiple medical problems in the same patients. Internal Medicine residents typically have a one-half day continuity-of-care clinic each week. They take inpatients rotations in general medicine, subspecialty medicine, and in critical care units. They do subspecialty electives in the subspecialties listed below.

2. HOW LONG IS THE TRAINING IN THIS SPECIALTY?

Three years

3. ARE THERE SUBSPECIALTIES? WHAT ARE THEY?

Internal Medicine has multiple subspecialties. Training in these subspecialties occurs after the three years of general internal medicine residency training. This training can last from two to three years. Subspecialties include allergy and immunology, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, geriatrics, hematology/oncology, infectious disease, nephrology, pulmonary medicine, and rheumatology.

4. HOW COMPETITIVE IS THE SPECIALTY OVERALL?

Approximately 20% of US medical students are interested in Internal Medicine training. Competition for Internal Medicine residency positions is not as difficult as some of the surgical subspecialties such as orthopedics, ophthalmology, and dermatology. The TTUHSC School of Medicine program probably has an "average" level of competitiveness. It is more competitive than some community-based programs. It probably is not as competitive as Southwestern. However, some of the larger, more prestigious programs have very large match quotas and consequently go down fairly low on their match list. Our program fills at different levels each year. Some years we have filled with our top 25 applicants.

5. WHAT ARE THE AVERAGE STEP I SCORES FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

I am not aware of an average score throughout the US. At Texas Tech our average scores probably range from 190 to 210. This varies each year. The scores are reviewed in the context of other applicant qualifications including personal interview and letters of recommendation.

6. DOES THE FIRST TIME STEP I FAILURE PREVENT STUDENTS FROM MATCHING INTO THIS SUBSPECIALTY? No

7. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE?

This is helpful but not essential.

8. HOW IMPORTANT IS INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS?

This is helpful but this is not essential.

9. WHAT ARE THE TOP REGIONAL PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

There are strong programs at Southwestern, UT Houston, UT Galveston, UT San Antonio, Scott & White, and Baylor.

10. WHAT ARE THE TOP NATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THE SPECIALTY?

There are multiple strong programs on the East Coast, West Coast, and in the Midwest.

11. HOW MANY PROGRAMS SHOULD STUDENTS APPLY TO?

I would think that students should at least apply to ten programs. Depending on individual circumstances and academic records, they may not need to visit ten programs. That decision can be made as the applicant reviews his/her situation during the fall and winter.

12. WHAT ARE PROGRAM DIRECTORS LOOKING FOR IN APPLICANTS FOR THIS SPECIALTY?

At the Lubbock program we are looking for students who are “very interested in internal medicine and who have a strong interest in being in Lubbock”. We would like to recruit residents who work hard, interact well with patients and other medical personnel, and are reasonably happy with their family and individual circumstances. For example, students who do not want to remain in Lubbock probably should not put our program at the top of their list. Most students in Internal Medicine matches should be prepared to go to one of the top three programs on their list.

13. FROM WHICH DEPARTMENT AND WHAT RANKS OF FACULTY SHOULD STUDENTS REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

Students should try to have at least one letter of recommendation from someone in Internal Medicine. Not all letters need to be from Internal Medicine faculty. Strong letters written by any faculty member who clearly knows the student provide the best information.

14. ARE AUDITION ELECTIVES COMMONLY REQUIRED OR STRONGLY RECOMMENDED BY PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

I cannot answer this question with any level of certainty. It is reasonable for students to visit other programs and do electives there. If they have a very strong interest in matching into a particular program, then good work on an elective will almost certainly enhance their application and their likelihood for success. However, this is clearly not necessary to match into most programs.

15. WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO DURING THE 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD YEARS OF MEDICAL SCHOOL TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THIS SPECIALTY?

All students regardless of their long-term career interest should make every effort to learn as much as possible in their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of medical school. If they have interests in research or clinical projects they might try to undertake those projects during the gap between the 1st and 2nd year in the summer. If they have interest in Internal Medicine they might make that interest known to faculty members in the department in an effort to can contacts and advice as needed.