

ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY RESIDENCY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SPECIALTY OVERVIEW

Orthopedics is the treatment of disorders affecting the musculoskeletal system. Anatomic areas covered include the spine, pelvis, and extremities. This includes treatment of traumatic and non-traumatic causes of dysfunction. Patients range in age from new born to elderly.

HOW LONG IS THE TRAINING IN THIS SPECIALTY?

The residency is 5 years at most programs. Some add one year of research. Half of all residents do an additional fellowship that is from 6 months to 1 year.

ARE THERE SUBSPECIALTIES? WHAT ARE THEY?

Orthopedic subspecialties include: pediatrics, spine, sports, adult reconstruction (Total Joints), musculoskeletal oncology, foot & ankle, hand, and upper extremities (elbow and shoulder).

HOW COMPETITIVE IS THE SPECIALTY OVERALL? THE TTUHSC SOM PROGRAM?

Orthopedics is one of the most competitive specialties. TTUHSC's Lubbock program is competitive with other programs in the region.

Does a first time Step 1 failure prevent students from matching into this specialty?

Failure of Step 1 does not eliminate an applicant, but does require a good explanation. The applicant would have to have impressive credentials in other areas to compensate for such an event.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE?

Research helps with the interview process. It is more important to understand and be conversant with your research than have many papers listed on your CV. It is a chance to stand out, but certainly not a requirement.

HOW IMPORTANT IS INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS?

Leadership roles in student organizations can help distinguish an applicant.

WHAT ARE THE TOP NATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, University of Iowa, Mayo Clinic, University of Washington in Seattle.

IN GENERAL, HOW MANY PROGRAMS SHOULD STUDENTS APPLY TO?

All that the student is interested in attending. Average is around 25.

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

Solid educational background (USMLE scores), ability to work with a team, good clinical evaluations, leadership skills, and a balanced life (outside interests).

FROM WHICH DEPARTMENT(S) AND WHAT RANKS OF FACULTY SHOULD STUDENTS REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

Should have a letter from the orthopedic chairman and a faculty member that knows the applicant.

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

Audition electives are required by some programs. In most programs, they allow an opportunity for a resident to distinguish themselves and demonstrate an interest in a program. There is the chance that an applicant will not fit in well at a program and the audition elective may allow the program or the applicant realize this before the match.

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO DURING THEIR FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD YEARS OF MEDICAL SCHOOL TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THIS SPECIALTY?

During the first two years, the student should work to keep in the top quarter of the class rank. High scores on the USMLE are useful as it is one of the only uniform measures from school to school. Try to meet some of the orthopedic faculty through student organizations or research activities. If available to the student, time in clinic or the operating room in orthopedics would be helpful. During third year, if the curriculum allows rotate on the orthopedic service. It is unlikely a student will match if they do not have orthopedic rotations by the time the applications are due in October of their 4th year. Arrange any audition rotations for your 4th year. Some programs fill early, so try to make the arrangements for rotations half-way through your 3rd year.