**FAQs: (Specialty)**

**Given Step 1 is now Pass/Fail, what advice would you give to a first-year medical student about what they can or should be doing early on to be competitive in your specialty?**

-Get the best grades you can get. Better to over-prepare than under-prepare.

-Identify mentors: ideally an MS3/MS4 that has an interest in your desired specialty, a resident in your desired specialty, and a faculty member in your desired specialty or someone in clinical practice (preferably in academics).

-Work on something that is extra-curricular. Find a volunteering opportunity. Find a research projects or look for a research opportunity over the summer.

-If there is an interest group that focuses on your desired specialty then join it!

-If there is a residency with your desired specialty at your program, go meet the program director and ask them what kind of medical student matches in their program

-Look at previous year match statistics to discover the characteristics of students that match in your desired specialty.

**Would you ever take someone with a Step 1 failure?**

-Realistically this is unlikely.

**What advice would you give about getting letters of recommendation in your specialty?**

-Try to establish a relationship with a faculty member early on and cultivate this over time.

-Don’t be flippant about letters of recommendation. To write an effective letter, the faculty member needs to know a bit about you. You can include this in your personal statement, or, better yet, you will have interacted with the faculty member in the past.

**What is the value of doing audition rotations in your specialty?**

-Away rotations let YOU interview the program just as much as it lets them interview you. I recommend at least one audition rotation, ideally at a program that you’d like to end up at.

**To what extent does research, publications, or presentations affect one’s ability to match in your specialty?**

-Most students that match in dermatology have participated in research, have multiple publications and have presented at some venue (see more below).

**Is a Step 2CK score needed before you will invite someone for an interview?**

-I will have to defer this question as I do not run a residency program, but I suspect the answer is yes.

**What does the perfect applicant look like in your specialty?**

-In 2022 the average applicant that matched ranked 9 programs, had a mean USMLE Step 2 score of 257, reported 7 research experiences with 20 abstracts, presentations or publications, and had 4 or more work experiences and 11 volunteer experiences. 40% were AOA members (source: [SAP Crystal Reports - (nrmp.org)](https://www.nrmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Charting-Outcomes-MD-Seniors-2022_Final.pdf)). That being said, there’s no such thing as perfect!

**Does a student need to Honor in your specialty to match?**

-No, but it is HIGHLY recommended.

**The students have significant elective time during their 3rd year for career exploration.**

**a. What electives would you recommend to a student who knows they are interested in your specialty?**

-Clinical dermatology, dermatopathology, mohs surgery, pediatric dermatology, dermatology research.

**b. What electives would you recommend to a student who is undecided but considering your specialty?**

-Clinical dermatology

**Is there anything else I haven’t asked that you feel an applicant to your specialty ought to know?**

-Dermatology is a competitive specialty. In 2022 two-thirds of US MD seniors matched, which means that one-third did not. Set yourself up for success and aim to be above average when compared with other dermatology residency applicants. During your medical school career aim to establish relationships with dermatology faculty that can potentially be an advocate for you and provide a strong letter of recommendation.