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Factors Associated With Successful Matching to Dermatology Residency Programs by Reapplicants and Other Applicants Who Previously Graduated From Medical School

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Objectives To identify factors associated with and not associated with successful matching and matriculation (hereinafter "matching") to dermatology residency programs for applicants who previously graduated from medical school and to distinguish which factors are within applicants' control.

Design Observational cohort study.

Setting Six accredited academic dermatology residency training programs in the United States.

Participants A total of 221 residency applicants who previously graduated from medical school and who applied through standardized electronic application to 1 or more of the participating residency training programs.

Main Outcome Measure Matriculation to a dermatology residency program by August 2008 following the 2006 residency application period.

Results Forty-six of 221 former medical school graduates included in this study matched to a dermatology residency program. Factors strongly associated with matching included United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 3 score; submission of letters written by dermatologists from institutions that train dermatology residents; completion of preliminary medicine internships rather than transitional or other internship types; listing of research experience; publishing of medical manuscripts; and completion of non–Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Examination dermatology fellowships. Factors not associated with increased matching included volunteer work; PhD status; sex; number of posters or presentations at dermatology conferences; quality of journal publications; and first authorship. Most successful applicants limited personal statements to 1 page and did not mention previously failing to match. The study sample represented at least 86% of such nontraditional applicants who matched in 2006.

Conclusions For candidates seeking to match into dermatology residency programs after graduating from medical school, there are factors within their control that are associated with higher rates of match success. This study provides evidence to assist mentors who counsel such candidates.