May 15, 2020

The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on travel and group assembly. The Coalition for Physician Accountability (Coalition), a cross-organizational group composed of AACOM, AAMC, ACCME, ACGME, AMA, AOGME, AOA, CMSS (OPDA), ECFMG, FSMB, LCME, NBME, and NBOME, has decided to protect fourth year medical students by discouraging rotations outside of their home institutions


The American Council of Academic Plastic Surgeons supports the safety procedures enacted by The Coalition, and, at the same time, recognizes the obstacles students face as they begin the process of choosing a residency. Match data suggest that rotating at a location significantly increases the likelihood that a prospective student will match at that location. Stated another way, most residency programs rank students that have rotated with them higher than those students that did not rotate at their institution. If students across the country have varying travel capabilities as a result of differing institutional liberties, those residents confined to home will face a significant barrier to matching into what is already a very competitive specialty. ACAPS desires to minimize inequities in eventual resident selection, therefore, until all medical students across the country are free to travel to other U.S. locations, we support The Coalition’s guidelines and strongly urge that no integrated or independent plastic surgery residency programs allow medical student rotators from visiting institutions.

ACAPS and The Coalition also recognize that some medical schools do not have affiliated integrated or independent plastic surgery programs and that students interested in a career in plastic surgery are forced to go elsewhere for the experience and guidance. We feel that restricting this subset of students would be a disservice to their education, essentially banning them from learning about plastic surgery even though they have an expressed interest in doing so. As such, ACAPS and The Coalition recognize the need for an exception to the above guidance; integrated or independent plastic surgery programs allowed to accept visiting fourth year students by their sponsoring institution are permitted to host a fourth year student from a school that does not have a plastic surgery program if that prospective student is allowed to travel.

The Coalition has also established recommendations regarding interviews, and has moved the medical student application release date and ERAS opening to October 21 and the rank order list certification deadline to March 3, 2021. ACAPS supports the expectation that all plastic surgery programs commit to online interviews and virtual visits for all applicants, including local students, during the 2020-2021 academic year. We recognize this significantly changes the resident selection process, and we will be working with you as a plastic surgery community to develop strategies, techniques, and new timelines to help applicants and programs discover the best possible matches.
In order to aid medical students investigate possible career choices and help fourth year students make well-reasoned decisions about plastic surgery residencies, ACAPS is developing numerous web-based offerings and virtual experiences that highlight plastic surgery as a profession and provide access to plastic surgery residency programs. We are working with other plastic surgery organizations and residency programs to create a reliable and authoritative source for information in these rapidly changing times. Please bookmark our website, https://acaplasticsurgeons.org ACAPS has some excellent resources for you, and we are confident you have good ideas for us.

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