



# First-line responders to the 2021 R-1 match and the needs of medical students

Kenzy Abdelhamid<sup>1</sup> · Kirsten Johnson<sup>2,3</sup>

Received: 26 July 2020 / Accepted: 5 August 2020 / Published online: 10 December 2020

© Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP)/ Association Canadienne de Médecine d'Urgence (ACMU) 2020

**Keywords** R-1 Match · COVID-19 · CAEP · Medical student

Dear Editor,

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) has made several changes to the 2021 R-1 Match, including the cancellation of visiting electives and in-person interviewing [1]. These interactions have previously been considered invaluable, costing the average student applicant about 30K in application, transportation, and accommodation fees. As a 2021 R-1 Match applicant, I reflect on their vitality, how their absence will impact my match, and how residency programs will respond to this change in culture. With this letter, I wish to first applaud CAEP, FRCPC, and CCFP (EM) leaders and program directors for their quick recognition of the urgent need for connectivity along with their timely response: almost every Canadian EM program has already made generous effort to reach out to medical students by virtual means through social media, as well as townhalls, question and answer sessions, virtual grand rounds, and academic teachings. I also hope to raise discussion on how the current circumstances can shape future match cycles by the creation of continuous virtual alliance between undergraduate medical education (UGME) and postgraduate medical education (PGME) students and educators to make for a more equitable and transparent matching process.

The residency matching process is one that is met with great anxiety and fear by medical students. That is because

there is uncertainty in the expectations and a lack of transparency in the way of which they process applicant selection. In my opinion, this is the result of barriers in communication between residency program leaders and medical student trainees. Because of the need to connect with programs, students will meticulously plan and invest large sums of money in attending electives across the country, often without much hesitation. Due to current limitations, it has become the residency programs' responsibility to connect with and recruit their future trainees. To my knowledge, Canadian EM programs have pioneered the move to virtual connectivity. This widespread connectivity so early in the R-1 Match process is unprecedented. Though onsite electives and face-to-face meetings are difficult to replace, online platforms allow for connectivity that transcends time and space. They can also be independent of each UGME's elective policy and are more equitable in terms of financial expenditure.

While there is persisting ambiguity regarding the upcoming match, the increasing initiative on the postgraduate programs' ends to connect with students is leading to early engagement and the initiation of more transparent discussions regarding program expectations. I am grateful for this nationwide virtual networking through the CAEP community. Paradoxically, changes that seemed to further disconnect UGME and PGME are resulting in more openness and dialog. With continuous investment and commitment in the creation of creative and virtual solutions, barriers in collaboration and mentorship can be effectively broken. As a result, this complex matriculation process can be met with less anxiety and fear for the upcoming year and beyond.

---

✉ Kenzy Abdelhamid  
kenzy.abdelhamid@mail.mcgill.ca

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

<sup>2</sup> Department of Emergency Medicine, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP), Ottawa, Canada

## Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Reference

1. COVID-19 | AFMC [Internet]. Afmc.ca. 2020 [cited 3 July 2020]. <https://afmc.ca/en/priorities/covid19>

