Hello!

I wanted to check in with some tips/advice/perspective to help you during the interview season. These upcoming months are typically very exciting, albeit often stressful times, loaded with great opportunities, lots of decision-making, inherent uncertainty, and extensive travel. Fortunately, at the end of this demanding process, our students consistently have wonderful options for their rank lists.

**INTERVIEWS**
During the next few weeks, many programs will continue to issue interview invitations. In this early stage, I recommend accepting all interview invitations, with a goal to interview at 10-12 programs. Although this is not a hard and fast number, it can be useful as a general guideline, since in years past this approximate number has enabled students to make very thoughtful decisions about programs as they create their rank list.

There’s lots of variability as to when interview invitations are issued--- which is sometimes even as late as January. Some programs respond immediately upon receipt of the ERAS application. Others wait for deadlines to pass so they can review all applications. While some may pare the applicant pool down to a small number, leading to later invitations. For the time being, having heard from only a few or even no programs is fine as it's still quite early in the process but if as the weeks progress into November and at that time you haven't heard from programs or your interview invitations are low in number, please inform me as well as your specialty advisor. If we're alerted early enough (mid Nov) we can usually offer advice/solutions which may help you extend your options.

In general, as the interview season progresses, it can often be very difficult to decide which interviews to attend and which ones to decline. There can be date/travel conflicts or sometimes the number of interviews offered can be overwhelming. It can be really hard to turn down interviews. If you need help with these decisions, please feel free to contact me and/or your specialty advisor. If you’d like to cancel an interview, give a program as much lag time as possible (ideally weeks) so they can offer the slot to someone else and also, if you do cancel, confirm that the coordinator has received the message. If you’re trying to consolidate travel or shuffle interview dates, often programs can be very accommodating. Unfortunately though, some programs have very few options for interview dates with limited flexibility so rescheduling/coordinating travel doesn’t always work out.

Often students have asked about the best time to schedule an interview. Being that there’s no standard to how programs approach interview timing with rank list creation, there is no definite answer. Many students in years past have chosen to schedule one/two interviews at programs of lesser interest early in the season so they could practice and get used to the situation. It’s also been common for students to schedule a few interviews at programs of lesser interest at the end of the season (January) so if they need to cancel, they can give the program lots of lag time to offer the slot to another applicant. Even if there’s no choice in the offered interview date, it
seems like the interviews have gone well for our students—no matter when they’ve occurred. If you have questions/concerns about interviewing, please contact me and we can talk/meet.

If you don't hear from or get rejected for interview at one of your top choice programs, consider e-mailing the program director (and cc the program coordinator) to reiterate your interest and include in the e-mail a few lines about pertinent points of interest from your application. I've seen success with this approach many times in years past with students receiving interviews and sometimes matching at programs where they were initially declined. Timing is important if you opt to contact a program to reiterate your interest or to ask for reconsideration. I'd recommend waiting at least until the application deadline has passed—and even several weeks after that since there's consistently lots of movement in the interview schedules as the season progresses with applicants canceling invites or changing their schedules----so slots open. I think that contacting programs too early, (ie before deadlines or even up until the first two weeks after deadlines) could be problematic since in the early stages there may be no available slots to offer to an inquiry.

It's always helpful to have faculty in the loop. November is a good time to follow-up with your letter writers by e-mailing them a thank you note for their letter of recommendation—and if you'd like--include in the note, your interview opportunities—and/or status (ie waiting to hear from these programs)---as these faculty can often offer support during these upcoming months. Also please keep me as well as your specialty advisors up to date with your opportunities.

THANK YOU NOTES
Once you interview, send a thank you note (unless the program specifies not to). Sometimes you'll be interviewed by so many people that it's impossible to recognize all of them with notes. If that happens, send one to the program director and chair (if you met them). Also--use your judgment to choose others with whom you connected positively. If residency coordinators have been especially helpful, it's a nice gesture to send a note to them. The method of sending the notes is quite variable and I’d recommend choosing the route that’s most comfortable for you. Many students send hard copy printed notes composed from a generic template which is personalized for each program and/or interviewer. Others (a handful) send hand-written note cards. Some opt to send a note via e-mail (which often generates a response from the interviewer). If you send a hard copy of the note, it will likely end up in your file. Later on as interviews wind down, and students formulate their rank lists, many send a follow-up note expressing their strong interest to their top choice programs in late Jan and Feb. (That's the next step in the process and I'll go over rank list decision-making in January when you return to campus).

NRMP
If you haven’t already, you’ll need to register with the NRMP (National Residency Matching Program). You can access registration through their website (www.NRMP.org). This site is a great resource in terms of explaining the algorithm of the Match, offering FAQs for Senior students—and importantly, delineating the rules of the Match (Match Participation Agreement). Most, if not all, senior students need to register with the NRMP (there are rare exceptions) since most senior students must obtain their residency positions through the NRMP. The exceptions include positions obtained through the Military Match, the SF Match (Opthal) and the AUA (Urology) Match. As a reminder, the preliminary year program which is required before starting
an advanced program secured in the SF Match or the AUA Match is obtained through the NRMP.

USMLE STEP 2 CK & CS
I know that there was a flurry of concern about Step 2 scores and interview invitations. To offer some perspective, in recent years past, Step 2 has not been a component of the original ERAS application for most of our students as many Year Four students weren't able to take the exam until fall/early winter due to sub-I and application demands. This timing did not seem to hinder their interview options and in general they received a generous number of interviews from a variety of programs. In addition, there seems to be some variability with how strictly a program adheres to this guideline too. The ERAS study that was circulated to your class earlier this fall offers an in depth review of this subject.

In terms of sending the Step 2 scores to programs, most students in previous years have not chosen to automatically update programs with their Step 2 CK score, as they often want to see the score before sending it. With this approach, my advice is to send programs an updated USMLE transcript this fall if your Step 2 CK score is similar or higher than your Step 1 score. If your Step 2 CK score is significantly below your Step 1 score and you haven’t heard from a program that says that it requires Step 2 for interview, then you could forward it, with hopes of getting an interview but keep in mind that you can’t selectively forward the score to just one program---so all programs will see the score---and in that case, you’ll need to weigh whether you’d like the other programs to see the score at that time. I do recommend that everyone eventually forward their Step 2 CK and CS scores to programs by late January so that the programs know that you’ve passed those components of the USMLE----since in most states passing those components is necessary towards obtaining a training license. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

IMPORTANT DATES
NRMP registration— currently open  (www.NRMP.org)

Geisel deadline for taking Step 2 CS—November 15, 2012

Geisel Deadline for taking Step 2 CK---December 15, 2012

Rank Order List opens ---Jan 15, 2013

Rank Order List closes ---Feb 20, 2013

I’ll be sending more information to you in January with guidance on follow-up thank you notes, ranking, and Match week.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions during these upcoming months. Just e-mail me (susan.harper@dartmouth.edu) if you’d like to talk or set up a time to meet. You can always try me at home in the evenings at 603-643-9339.
Good luck during these busy months! I look forward to hearing from you!

Susan Harper