

Selecting a Pediatric Orthopedic Fellowship

Orthopedic surgery is fortunate with a variety of exciting opportunities for subspecialty fellowship training following the completion of residency. But, the process of fellowship selection can be confusing for applicants and for fellowship programs. The matching program for orthopedic residency has worked well for many years. The matching programs for some subspecialties have failed for a variety of reasons. The most commonly cited reason is a mismatch between the number of applicants and the number of positions being offered.

Also, there may be some relationship to successful matching programs and Subspecialty Certification by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery. Currently, the ABOS has established education standards and qualifications in two subspecialty areas of orthopedic surgery, Surgery of the Hand and Orthopedic Sports Medicine. There is not a subspecialty certification process for pediatric orthopedic surgery although almost all practicing pediatric orthopedic surgeons have completed at least one year of fellowship training.

There is not a requirement for certification in Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery. Accreditation of fellowships is voluntary and is supervised by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Accreditation insures that certain standards of education are being met, but lack of accreditation does not imply that programs are inferior. Many excellent fellowship programs have elected not to enter, or to withdraw from this voluntary accreditation process.

For the past two years, the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America (POSNA) has coordinated a matching process for fellowship applicants in pediatric orthopedic surgery. This has been very successful and has coincided with an increase in the number of fellowship applications.

Beginning this fall, there will be a pediatric orthopedic surgery fellowship match for the 2012 fellowship positions. This match will be supervised by the San Francisco Matching Program (SFMP). The SFMP has a proven track record of organizing and supervising matching programs for other orthopedic surgery fellowships. POSNA's affiliation with SFMP is a part of an AOA initiated, and now AAOS supervised, program for all orthopedic surgery subspecialty fellowship matches. There will be universal application forms, interview and acceptance dates. This Orthopedic Fellowship Match Program Initiative (OFMPI) is now known as an AAOS Federation of Orthopedic Subspecialty Matches. To participate in the pediatric orthopedic surgery match, orthopedic surgery residents must register with the SFMP on their website. The registration fees are outlined on the website and vary depending of the number of programs that a resident applies to.

The application process for the 2012 fellowship year starts in September of 2010. Applications for pediatric orthopedic surgery fellowships will be accepted by the SFMP from 9/1/2010 until 3/31/2011. However, we strongly encourage your residents to complete their applications early (10/1/2010) and at the latest by 12/31/2010. Fellowship programs can begin their interview process on 1/1/2011 and interview up until the 3/31/2011 deadline. The match list is due 4/14/2011 and the SFMP will notify the fellowships of the match on 4/22/2011. The programs will then notify the residents of their accepted position. If a resident does not match for some reason, POSNA headquarters can be contacted by the resident and will help them contact unmatched programs looking for fellowship applicants.

If a resident or fellowship program participates in this match, there are rules that must be followed. By signing up, the residents agree to abide by these rules. They cannot accept a position outside of the match until after 4/22/2011, and can do so only if they do not match with a fellowship program. Violation of this agreement will mean they will be unable to apply for a POSNA candidate membership until two years after their fellowship. Similarly, if a fellowship program violates the match, it will be unable to participate in the match for the following two years. There is a grievance committee at POSNA that will supervise any concerns that arise during the match.

Based on feedback received from resident surveys, we think these changes will be very helpful. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact us at anytime.

No matter what fellowship you choose congratulations on your decision for a career in pediatric orthopedics. You can be assured of excellent training opportunities as well as well-paying career in what is truly the greatest subspecialty in orthopedic surgery!

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