COMMENT & RESPONSE

Consolidating NRMP Fellowship Matches to Enhance the Applicant Experience

To the Editor The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) appreciates the perspectives shared by Bravo-Jaimes in her recent From the Heart commentary.1 In 2019, she and her spouse participated in different matches within the NRMP Specialties Matching Service. For the NRMP to leverage the matching algorithm to pair couple partners, both partners must participate in the same match. This is necessary not only to ensure the integrity of ranking data but also to adhere to the fellowship match timelines established by the different specialty organization program director groups that sponsor fellowship matches and retain authority over the timing of the recruitment and matching processes.

Since 2015, the NRMP has intentionally worked with fellowship match sponsors to consolidate matches wherever possible to ensure applicants can access programs across multiple subspecialties in which they might be interested and facilitate couples matching. Today, the NRMP facilitates 7 consolidated fellowship matches representing more than 60 subspecialties.

After collaborating with the Council of Pediatric Subspecialties, the Association of Pediatric Program Directors, and the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine, the NRMP launched the Medicine and Pediatric Specialties Match, representing 38 subspecialties. This effort required each subspecialty entering into the combined match to reconsider recruitment timing and processes impacting applicants, institutions, and programs. In the Medicine and Pediatric Specialties Match, applicants can rank any combination of medicine, pediatric, multidisciplinary, or addiction programs and may participate in the combined match as a couple. The Medicine and Pediatric Specialties Match just celebrated a second successful Match Day that included 139 couples, of which 84% of both individuals matched while another 14% of couples had 1 partner who matched.

Over its more than 70-year history, the NRMP has worked to prioritize the needs of learners in providing matching services to the medical education community, and the NRMP remains dedicated to serving specialties and their future couple trainees. NRMP also remains committed to engaging in dialogue with specialty organizations regarding fellowship match consolidations not only to address the challenges highlighted by Bravo-Jaimes but also to consider ways the NRMP can continue to strengthen the match experience for fellowship applicants.

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