

## **BMA-NA Physicians in Training & Transition Division**

### **HOW TO JOIN US RESIDENCY PROGRAMS AS BMGs (Burmese Medical Graduates)**

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### **"Conflict of Interest" Disclosure**

- Interview Panel, Internal Medicine Residency Selection Committee  
Caritas St Elizabeth's Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts
- Committee member, Test Material Development Committee,  
American Society of Hematology & National Board of Medical  
Examiners joint task force

## Why do International Medical Graduates (IMG) need to undergo US/Canadian residency programs?

- To obtain state medical licenses
- To obtain specialty board certifications
- To obtain hospital admitting privileges
- For credentialing purpose

## Can IMGs get state licenses without undergoing US/Canadian residencies ?

**NO** . But there are very few exceptions.

1. If a US medical school invites you as a Faculty Member and if you have completed formal specialist or GP training overseas and if you have impressive credentials.

This will lead to temporary medical license initially. After 2 -3 years of satisfactory service and after passing all USMLE examinations, the Graduate Medical Education department will sign you off as equivalent to graduation from the residency program.

This is relevant to < 0.001 % of all IMGs.

2. Maine medical license - 3 years of training in UK  
Oklahoma medical license - 2 years of training in UK

## What is a Residency Program ?

- Well-structured educational and hands-on clinical training program with a defined time length leading to an independent practitioner status
- Residency programs vary in length depending on the specialty ( 3-8 yrs )
- Independent practitioner status
  - Primary Care Physicians
  - Specialists
- You make the final decision for your patient and also bear final responsibility ( that means you are the boss ).

## Residency Statistics & Politics

- *So it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will win hundred times in hundred battles. If you only know yourself, but not your opponent, you win one and lose the next. If you do not know yourself or your enemy, you will always lose.*

( Sun Tzu: *The Art of War* )

- The residency candidate needs to know himself/herself and the residency statistics, politics and the playing field.
- Data (intelligence) gathering and networking are very important as they can make or break one's life.

## Residency Candidate ( i.e. You )

- Now you're in USA. What do you want to be ?
- Do you want to be a doctor in USA ?
  - No ( Sorry, I can't help you much )
  - Yes ( Congratulations ! )
- What kind of MD do you want to be ?
  - I don't know. Let me think about it later.
  - I am not sure. Let me try Transitional Year.
  - I will do whatever is popular among American Medical Graduates.
  - I will do whatever is popular among IMGs.
  - I will do whatever is available.
  - I want to be Physician or Surgeon or Ob-Gyn or Pediatrician etc.
  - I am flexible and make compromises.

## Residency Statistics, Politics and the Playing Field

### The ugly truths

- Residency education is part of the ongoing education of the American Medical Graduates (i.e. USMGs and Canadian medical graduates) and therefore residency positions must be given to them.
- USA has no obligation to train all IMGs present in the USA.
- Only available extra positions will be offered to suitable high caliber IMGs.
- This is understandable and obviously residency search is one of the most competitive and potentially nerve-wrecking event for an IMG.
- However, if you understand yourself and the numbers and if you know how to play the game, you will win.

## Residency Terminology

- **AMGs**: Graduates from US ( MD, DO ) and Canadian medical schools accredited by the American Association of Medical Colleges.
- **IMGs** : Non-AMGs whose medical schools are recognized by the WHO.
- **Transitional Year Residency** : similar to rotating internship in Burma
- **Preliminary Residency**: PGY-1 in medicine / surgery and the trainee will proceed to a specialty, e.g. Anesthesia, Ophthalmology, Radiology, PM&R, Orthopedics, ENT etc
- **Categorical Residency**: Specialty training leading to specialty board certification
- **Intern**: Post-graduate Year 1, First Year Resident
- **Sub-intern**: usually a medical student
- **Resident**: Postgraduate trainee
- **Fellow**: Subspecialty Resident who has completed training in a primary specialty
- **Attendings**: Consultants, Primary Care Physicians who make final decisions for the patients

## Residency Statistics

2006	AMG (US, Canada, DO)	IMG (US-IMG and foreign IMG )
<b>USMLE pass rate (1<sup>st</sup> time)</b>		
Step 1	95%	68%
Step 2	95%	77%
Step 2 CK	98%	83%
Step 3	96%	75%
<b>NRMP 2007 match</b>		
Registered	16586	13,929
Out of match offer	0 (0%)	3,095 (22.2%)
Not joining the match	0 (0%)	1,664 (11.9%)
Matched (of total)	15,125 (91.19%)	4,759 (34.1%)
Unmatched (of total)	8.81%	4,411 (32%)
Matched ( % of match )	91.19%	51.8%
Unmatched ( % of match )	8.81%	48.2%
Post-match (scramble)	Not available	Not available

Specialty Positions AMGs vs IMGs (2004)					
Specialty	Positions	AMGs(%)	IMGs(%)	Duration(yr)	Fellowship
Anesthesia	1167	87	13	4	Yes
Dermatology	275	97	3	4	Yes
Emergency	1211	96	4	3	Yes
ENT	250	99	1	5	Yes
Family Med	2962	89	11	3	No
Gen Surgery	1039C 980P	97	3	5	Yes
Internal Med	4624C 1675P	70	30	3	Yes
Neurology	541	72	28	4	Yes
Neurosurgery	143	99	1	6	Yes
Ob-Gyn	1138	88	12	4	Yes
Ophthalmology	440	92	8	4	Yes
Orthopedics	570	99	1	6	Yes
Pathology	398	71	29	4	Yes
Pediatrics	2209	86	14	3	Yes
PM&R	323	80	20	4	Yes
Plastic Surg	77	99	1	6	Yes
Rad Oncology	97	93	7	5	No
Radiology	920	95	5	5	Yes
Urology	233	77	23	5	Yes

### Where and what to apply

- IMG-friendly States : New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Michigan and Illinois
- IMG-friendly Hospitals : Dr Kyaw Moe has a list.
- IMG-friendly specialities : Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Practice
- where there is a Burmese Physician whose reputation is good
- What specialty you're interested in
- Bear in mind that many states require training license. Some states ( e.g. New York ) do not require it.

### What are the important criteria ( for IMGs ) for being invited for interviews ?

- Criteria vary from one institution to another.
- At my institution – USMLE scores > 90
  - 1 month of experience in US, Canada or Western EU
  - for 2007 academic year, we received 2300 applicants for 24 Internal Medicine residency positions
- Curriculum vitae is important
  - USMLE scores
  - references ( from US Physicians very preferred )
  - personal statement (very important)
  - year from graduation
  - visa status
  - prior clinical / research experience
  - degrees/diplomas, e.g. PhD, MS, MPH, MRCP, etc
  - publications
  - extracurricular activities
- Please check grammar and spellings very carefully

### Important Facts to be included in the NRMP ( National Resident Matching Program ) application

- Medical School and Graduation Year – mention reason if medical school duration is longer than 6 years ( e.g. medical schools were closed )
- Previous and Current Postgraduate Training ( clinical as well as research ) and previous and current appointments in chronological order
- Awards and honors
- Committee assignments ( local, national, international etc. )
- Editorial activity
- Graduate students you have trained and mentored
- Teaching experience
- Research interests and activities
- Presentations, grand rounds given
- Membership in professional societies
- Interests
- Bibliography ( publications, abstracts etc )
- Good grammar and spellings !!!

### Now you are invited to the interview

- Congratulations ! You now have 56% of becoming a resident
- Remember **they're interested** in you ( Americans don't waste time if not interested )
- People you will meet
  - Program Director, Associate Program Director, Faculty Attendings
  - Program co-ordinator
  - Chief Residents, Residents ( casually at lunch )
- All of them will evaluate you.
- Dress professionally. Be positive, confident, assertive and friendly. Don't be aggressive. Treat everyone with respect.
- Interview topics can range from your background to everything. Interviewers will try to judge if you can fit nicely to their program and will assess your listening comprehension and spoken English.

### The Interview Grading

#### Medical School

- (4) US Medical School
- (3) International with US experience ( documented )
- (2) International with US experience ( not documented )
- (1) International without US experience

#### Medical School Performance

- (5) Mostly honors
- (4) Some honors
- (3) Average
- (2) Below average
- (1) Below average with failures or academic extensions

#### Non-Medicine Clerkship Performance

- (5) Mostly honors
- (4) Some honors
- (3) Average
- (2) Below average
- (1) Below average with failures or academic extensions

#### Medical Clerkship

- (5) Mostly honors
- (4) Some honors
- (3) Average
- (2) Below average
- (1) Below average with failures or academic extensions

## The Interview

### Performance qualifier

- (3) Grade deflation evident ( very low % of class receives honors )
- (2) No inflation/deflation
- (1) Grade inflation evident ( most of classes get honors )

### USMLE step 1

- (5) > 220
- (4) 210 – 219
- (3) 200 – 209
- (2) 190 – 199
- (1) 179 – 189

### USMLE step 2

- (5) > 220
- (4) 210 – 219
- (3) 200 – 209
- (2) 190 – 199
- (1) 179 – 189

### Dean's Letter

- (5) Outstanding student, highest category recommendation
- (4) Very strong student
- (3) Average student
- (2) Below average student
- (1) Significant problems/ concerns ( red flags )

## The Interview

### Other Letters

- (5) Exceptionally strong; writers know student's performance
- (4) Strong letters with specific supporting comments
- (3) Good letters with limited supporting documents
- (2) Weak letters, limited directed knowledge
- (1) Letters suggest concerns

### Research Experience

- (3) Significant research experience
- (2) Limited research experience
- (1) No research experience

### Other experience

- (3) Major leadership position; or has overcome obstacles to pursue medical career
- (2) Multiple leadership or charitable activities
- (1) Minimal outside activities

### Interview personality

- (5) outstanding; posted; charismatic; a delight
- (4) Above average; impresses; enjoyable interview
- (3) average; converses spontaneously; comfortable but nothing special
- (2) Below average; interview needs to draw applicant into conversation
- (1) poor; never warms up; nothing to say; arrogant; irritating; offensive

## The Interview

### Command of English

- (4) Native ( or as good as ) speaker
- (3) Foreign speaker; English excellent
- (2) Foreign speaker; English passable
- (1) Foreign speaker; English poor

### Overall

Comparing this to 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students ( or other applicants ) you have known, would you place this applicant in ( includes your sense of how well he/she would fit in our program )

- (5) Top 10%
- (4) Top 11 – 25%
- (3) Top 26 – 50%
- (2) Bottom 26 – 50%
- (1) Bottom 25%

### Comments:

International Medical Graduates with an overall rating of 5 are those who we consider offering a position outside the match.

## The Interview

- After the interviews, always thank the interviewers.
- Always write “ Thank you ” letters to the interviewers and mention your interest in the program.
- If you like the program, ask if the program is willing to offer you the position outside the match.

### Things you can improve in the USA

- English – Practise speaking English. If possible, do not speak Burmese among fellow Burmese candidates.
- USMLE scores – This is an area where you can improve your chance of being invited to the interview
  - Aim USMLE score of  $> 96/96 = > 220$
  - Time in USA is very precious
  - study USMLE test items ( e.g. Kaplan Courses - Basic & Clinical Sciences ) intensively
  - Spend at least 15-16 hours a day for intensive study
  - Do not sleep more than 6 hours a day
  - Try Kaplan Mock examinations
  - It is better to not take the USMLE exams if you scores are  $< 90$  in the mock exams
  - **Do not fail** the exam if at all possible
  - Group study is very useful
- Mental and physical health important in this long journey : Have regular physical exercise at least 30 – 60 minutes a day. Spiritual ( religious dues) exercise is also important.
- Clinical observership/externship: after you pass USMLE and while you're in search of residency

### Your chance to being accepted into residency

- Depends on
  - your performance in the medical school
  - USMLE scores
  - prior clinical / research experience
  - prior professional qualifications
  - Listening comprehension / Spoken English
  - interview performance
  - reference letters
  - chosen specialty ( the less popular the specialty, the higher the chance. The lesser the chance with extremely popular specialties, e.g. orthopedics, neurosurgery )
  - the ability of your competitors ( AMGs and IMGs )
  - whether you want to residency position outside the match
  - years from medical graduation
  - visa status ( green card holders/ US citizens have better chance if the qualities are the same )
- Remember that your competitors are not AMGs or other Burmese.
- **Your biggest competitors are Indians, Chinese, other Asians, Europeans, Middle Easterners, South Americans and Autralians**

### King Bayinaung and Naungyoe Battle Concept

- Bayinaung and his troops fought the army of Hanthawaddy, an army with 10 times more men, at the place called Naungyoe.
- As his army crossed the river in rafts to join the battle on the other side, Bayinaung ordered his troops to destroy all their rafts.
- This meant they could not retreat. So they had to win. Bayinaung led his troops into the battle and they fought bravely despite being outnumbered 10 to one, until they won.
- The victory was ascribed to the bravery and determination of Bayinaung against impossible odds and the name of Naungyoe, along with the name of Bayinaung went down in legend. After this epic battle, Bayinaung and the King's army swept through central Burma conquering Bagan, Taungdwin and Salin.



Thank you for your attention and Best of Luck !