

The MATCH BOOK



Canadian Federation of Medical Students



CFMS FEMC
Canadian Federation
of Medical Students
Fédération des étudiants et des
étudiantes en médecine du Canada

carms 

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Produced by the Canadian Medical Association

Contact information and links

For additional information pertaining to the CaRMS match, please visit the following websites:

www.carms.ca

www.cfms.org

Please direct inquiries about CaRMS to help@carms.ca and inquiries about this publication and the CFMS's role to education@cfms.org

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Acronyms and abbreviations associated with the match

AFMC	Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada
AWS	applicant webstation
CAIR	Canadian Association of Internes and Residents
CaRMS	Canadian Resident Matching Service
CFMS	Canadian Federation of Medical Students
CMG	Canadian medical graduate
IMG	international medical graduate
MSPR	medical student performance record
PGY	postgraduate year
PWS	program webstation
ROL	rank order list

Executive summary

The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is the national body representing medical students in Canada. This annual publication, which is produced by the CFMS in association with the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS), is designed for Canadian medical students of all years. The information herein is intended to help students prepare for the match and plan their career, as well as increase their understanding of the CaRMS match.

Tips from residents

“Inform yourself as to the expectations of the program and location to which you’d like to match; you need to know what they prefer in terms of the quantity of electives in their specialty and the need for doing electives in their location in order to be considered.

Choose your referees judiciously; ask them if they’re willing to write a ‘strong’ reference letter for you, which will increase your chances of having good letters written on your behalf.”

— Meghan Cusack, PGY-1 NOSM

“Don’t think that you need to do all your electives in a specific discipline to make yourself a strong candidate. Doing different electives provides breadth and frequently makes candidates more informed about what’s out there.”

— Ivan Cacic, PGY-1 McMaster

“When choosing a career, don’t choose based on the most interesting aspects of a specialty because everything, to some extent, is interesting. Choose based on your ability to tolerate the most trying aspects of a specialty.”

— Anonymous resident

“Speak to recent grads but make sure you also speak to those with grey hair or dyed hair. Make sure they’re happy with their career choice and find out why or why not.”

— Anonymous resident

“Breathe.”

— Faith Hill

The 2008 match

A message from the Canadian Federation of Medical Students

In 2008, **99.1%** of Canadian medical graduates (CMGs) were matched in either the first or the second iteration of the CaRMS match, and **87%** were matched with one of their top three program choices. These figures are the highest in many years, indicating a very successful match for CMGs overall. In addition, 31% of CMGs chose family medicine as their first-choice discipline, the highest rate in almost a decade.

A record number of international medical graduates (IMGs) — 353 — were also matched this year and the presence of IMGs in the match has not yet had a negative impact on overall CMG success rates. IMGs were included in the first iteration of the match for the first time in 2007; most provinces employ a parallel match with positions set aside for IMGs, but Quebec and Manitoba maintain an open match, in which all residency positions are available to both CMGs and IMGs.

In 2007, a large number of residency positions were added across the country, but the increase was smaller in 2008. This means that although the ratio of available residencies to CMGs rose to 1.14 in 2007, it returned to 1.08 in 2008. As more and more students graduate from Canadian medical schools, a corresponding increase in available residency positions is needed to ensure match success and allow for retraining. The CFMS continues to advocate for the creation of these additional positions and monitors the situation in provinces with competing CMG and IMG streams.

A message from the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada

The AFMC was very pleased with the 2008 match for CMGs and IMGs. As noted above, the match was successful for all our CMGs, and more than 350 IMGs entered postgraduate training in Canada. The AFMC is pleased with the current matching structure, in which there are adequate positions for all CMGs as well as a number of additional positions for IMGs. The deans of medicine are committed to ensuring an adequate number of positions for CMGs year after year as well as to increasing the number of positions to accommodate IMGs for full or partial training.

Program directors in all our faculties work diligently to determine a candidate's eligibility for entry into postgraduate training.

On an annual basis, AFMC receives reports from CaRMS, which help AFMC discuss policy initiatives with government and other stakeholders. Ultimately, the number of positions available for training and the distribution of these positions is negotiated by governments, faculties of medicine and other stakeholders. Our aim continues to be to ensure the best possible opportunities for all those entering postgraduate training.

The match: roles and responsibilities

The Canadian Resident Matching Service

CaRMS is an independent, not-for-profit organization that is the gateway from undergraduate to postgraduate medical education in Canada. All Canadian medical schools participate in the match. CaRMS is governed by a board of directors that includes the CFMS, the Canadian Association of Internes and Residents, AFMC and other partners in medical education. The CEO, executive group and staff are responsible for the ongoing operations of the organization.

CaRMS does

- provide a central, secure electronic interface for application to postgraduate education
- provide a computer-based match algorithm to facilitate this process
- administer the matching process for postgraduate year 1 (PGY-1) entry, in addition to the PGY-3 emergency medicine match and Canadian access to the United States application system for postgraduate education

CaRMS does not

- determine a candidate's eligibility for entry into postgraduate training
- have any role in determining the number of residency positions available in any particular discipline or in any particular location
- have any role in determining the level of participation of IMGs in the match or which residency positions are available to IMGs

The match algorithm ensures that all eligible applicants are matched according to the merits of their application in addition to the rank lists of the candidates and the postgraduate programs.

Canadian medical graduates

Graduating medical students are responsible for submitting all necessary documentation to CaRMS and meeting appropriate deadlines. The electronic applicant webstation (AWS) becomes available at www.carms.ca in

early September for candidates expecting to graduate the following spring. Tailored applications, program selections and supporting documentation (personal letters, reference letters, curriculum vitae and abstracts) are submitted via AWS and direct mailing to CaRMS. Students determine which documents to submit based on the requirements of the programs, and these documents are assigned to programs accordingly. AWS users' applications become available for review by postgraduate programs in early December.

Following application review by the postgraduate programs, interviews are scheduled in January and February by applicants and programs independently of CaRMS. After interviews, applicants create rank order lists (ROLs) of their preferred postgraduate programs to be entered into the match algorithm. Likewise, programs rank applicants. The first iteration of the match is then conducted, followed by a second iteration for applicants who remain unmatched after the first. Once matched, applicants are legally obligated to attend the residency program.

Medical schools

Undergraduate medical education programs are responsible for registering their graduating students with CaRMS before the student application process. They provide CaRMS with proof of good standing and proof of acquisition of the MD degree. They also provide medical student performance records, formerly known as “dean’s letters.”

Provincial ministries of health and education

Government ministries are primarily responsible for setting the number of positions available in each jurisdiction in each entry discipline. These are determined and funded based on a number of factors, including societal need, budgetary concerns and capacity in the medical education system. Typically, there are more PGY-1 entry positions available than CMGs to accommodate retraining and IMGs.

Postgraduate programs

A postgraduate program is synonymous with a residency program in Canada, and each discipline at each school has a program director who is responsible for selections. Following the student submissions, directors, as well as program administrators, use the CaRMS program webstation to review applications. Interviews are scheduled directly with the candidates by the postgraduate programs in late January and early February. Following interviews, postgraduate directors create ROLs of applicants, which are then entered into the match algorithm along with the student ROLs.

International medical graduates

In 2007, IMGs were included in the first iteration of the CaRMS match for the first time. This decision was made by provincial governments in response to a shortage of health human resources. In most provinces, there are a set number of positions for IMGs, so that IMGs do not compete directly with CMGs. CaRMS administers these in a separate parallel match. In Manitoba and Quebec, IMGs compete directly with CMGs for the same positions. For Alberta programs, IMGs remain outside the CaRMS match.

Important dates for medical students

2009 match

Please check these dates at www.carms.ca — Operations — Future Matches

10 Sep 08	The applicant webstation opens at www.carms.ca for 2009 graduates.
28 Nov 08	Document assignment milestone.
1 Dec 08	The applicant webstation closes. All program selections and supporting documentation are due in advance of this deadline.
3 Dec 08	The program webstation re-opens for review of applications. Interviews are granted and scheduled by the programs in the weeks following.
24 January– 15 Feb 09	National out-of-town interview period. Candidates travel to the various programs where they have accepted interviews.
26 Feb 09	Applicants' rank order list is due. This is also the deadline for withdrawal from the match.
9 Mar 09	Match day. Applicants log-in to the webstation to discover which postgraduate program they have been assigned.

2010 match — heads up

Please check these dates at www.carms.ca — Operations — Future Matches

9 Sep 09	Applicant webstation opens
27 Nov 09	Applicant webstation closes
1 Dec 09	Program webstation opens
23 January–14 Feb 10	Interview period
25 Feb 10	Rank order list is due
8 Mar 10	Match day

The match algorithm: how it works

The computer-based match algorithm is executed following submission of applicant and program ROLs. These two sets of lists are the only input. These lists are independent of each other, meaning that the order in which applicants rank their programs has no bearing on the order in which programs rank their applicants.

So how does the algorithm actually work? In the simplest terms, an individual applicant is matched with his or her highest ranked program, provided that program is not already fully occupied by applicants who were ranked higher on the program's ROL. If it is full, the same process is applied to the applicant's second ranked program, and so on, until the applicant's ROL is exhausted. In this manner, the vast majority of applicants are matched with a program in the first iteration of the match.

Following the first iteration, unmatched applicants can reassess their standing and apply to programs with unfilled positions in a separate second iteration. The same algorithm is applied in this smaller match. In this manner, nearly all CMG applicants are matched and nearly all programs are filled.

Applicants who remain unmatched are then able to arrange interviews and placements with remaining programs independent of CaRMS in a post-match process.

What this means for medical students

- The sequence of your ROL should reflect true personal preferences.
- Rank all the programs that are acceptable to you, and do not rank any programs that you find unacceptable.
- Postgraduate programs are not permitted to ask you questions about your rank intentions, and you may decline to answer such questions.

Mini-match

To illustrate how the match works, let's take a look at a smaller version with applicants who have diverse career interests. This will require you to imagine that there are only four residency programs in the country, each with only one position available.

Applicant rank order list

Program rank order list

Results

Colleen Esterase
1. UBC – Peds
2. McMaster – Orthopedics
3. Dalhousie – Family Med
4. NOSM – Internal Med

UBC – Peds
1. Colleen Esterase
2. Cory Za
3. Barb Orygmi
4.

UBC – Peds
Colleen Esterase

Mal Ignant-Hyperthermia
1. NOSM – Internal Med
2. McMaster – Orthopedics
3. UBC – Peds
4.

McMaster – Orthopedics
1. Colleen Esterase
2. Cory Za
3. Barb Orygmi
4. Mal Ignant-Hyperthermia

McMaster – Orthopedics
Cory Za

→
Match

Cory Za
1. UBC – Peds
2. McMaster – Orthopedics
3.
4.

Dalhousie – Family Med
1. Barb Orygmi
2. Colleen Esterase
3.
4.

Dalhousie – Family Med
Barb Orygmi

Barb Orygmi
1. NOSM – Internal Med
2. Dalhousie – Family Med
3. UBC – Peds
4. McMaster – Orthopedics

NOSM – Internal Med
1. Colleen Esterase
2.
3.
4.

NOSM – Internal Med
Unfilled

Play-by-play

Colleen is a strong candidate and is confident about several of her applications and interviews. She chooses to rank UBC — Peds first as this is her preferred program, but she also ranks the others, which she finds acceptable, just in case. This is a wise strategy.

Mal also prefers UBC — Peds, but because she does not think she has much chance of getting into this competitive program, she ranks it last. She leaves Dalhousie — Family Med off her list because she thinks her interview went badly, even though she would like this program. These are both poor strategies.

After his interviews, Cory decides that he no longer wants to pursue a residency in family medicine or internal medicine so he leaves them off his list. This is a wise strategy.

Barb really wants to go to the NOSM for internal medicine but does not think her application is competitive enough. She ranks it first anyway because this is her preferred program and the other programs will never know she ranked them lower. This is a wise strategy.

Applicant success rates (%) by discipline, 2005–2007

Discipline	2007	2006	2005
Anatomical pathology	100	100	n/a
Anesthesia	87	85	83
Cardiac surgery	100	71	100
Community medicine	70	71	77
Dermatology	59	54	41
Diagnostic radiology	73	69	80
Emergency medicine	69	72	65
Family medicine	97	97	95
General surgery	83	77	90
Hematological pathology	n/a	100	n/a
Internal medicine	93	95	93
Laboratory medicine	94	95	100
Medical biochemistry	n/a	100	100
Medical genetics	100	100	100
Medical microbiology	63	71	50
Neurology	88	88	81
Neurosurgery	76	94	93
Nuclear medicine	100	71	100
Obstetrics/gynecology	83	79	74
Ophthalmology	65	62	64
Orthopedic surgery	82	80	95
Otolaryngology	80	62	63
Pediatrics	77	78	83
Physical medicine & rehabilitation	80	100	85
Plastic surgery	49	49	53
Psychiatry	97	97	94
Radiation oncology	70	91	82
Urology	74	74	74