

Match Day Interview/Application Process—How One Family Made Their Selection

Once my husband decided which field to apply to, we put together the application. My husband made sure to get letters from mentors in his chosen field who knew him well—including ones he had done extensive research with. We were happy that group included physicians with excellent reputations who are wonderful people. We also worked extensively on his personal statement to be sure it demonstrated things about him that didn't necessarily show up elsewhere in the application information. Then we submitted the application to a wide variety of programs—and plenty—not sure what to expect.

Thankfully, my husband received many interview invitations from a wide range of programs. The fact that the invitations come at various times—sometimes differing by months—made things a little tricky as we were scheduling the interview trips, and he ended up attending some early on that he may have switched with others that came in later, had he known. But we didn't want to waste too much money, so we just did a few more than enough in order to try to be sure to match. In his field they say 10-12 is plenty and I think he did 14 because a couple he was quite interested in were offered to us later on. He politely turned the rest down. In his field, on top of these expenses and interviews, one must also apply and interview at transition programs, so that was another six or so interviews for us.

We did our best to group interviews into trips so he could travel from one place to the next—*while being sure to attend every dinner in addition to the interview*. That is where the residents, who may have some say in the selection of the new residents, get to know you. It is also where you can find out a lot of extra information about the program and area and what it's like to live there and generally get a feel for how you would fit.

We have four small children and I wasn't able to attend any interviews with him, but he tried to give me a report on each so I could help make the decision. I also did my own investigating on the internet into the programs themselves as well as the cost of living and location and whatnot. We found it helpful to call people we knew who lived in the area or were making some of the same types of decisions we were—or had recently. One such friend, whose husband is completing his intern year, just started a very helpful blog talking about all this stuff. Check it out at www.thoughtsofadoctorswife.blogspot.com.

After all this, it was time to submit our rank list. We treated it like a work-in-progress, and discussed and changed it a bit after each interview. We ended up with five at the top that we loved and would be thrilled with, followed by others that we would also be happy with. But distinguishing between our top five turned out to be difficult! As we tried to weigh things, just for fun we put together a list of categories of things we cared about and then ranked those schools in each category from five down to one. If it seemed there was a tie, it could be ranked, for example, with one at a five, one at a four and the others all tied at three. Then we weighted the categories—the ones we felt were more important got a two, the less important got one and in between got 1.5. Then we multiplied the ranking in each category by the category's weight, and totaled all the points up for each school. Though we were doing this just as an exercise to help us sort through the decision (we didn't put much thought into the scoring system—it was more just for fun) looking back it is surprising to see that our top five on our match rank list ended up in the same order as our little scoring sheet! We made the decision without thinking about those scores in particular, so I was amazed to see (later) that it lined up exactly.

We felt each of these top programs offered excellent training and education, which is important to us. Some of the other **categories** we cared about are (in no particular order): Potential for future opportunities (inc. research), Exposure/Chance at fellowships, Hours/Schedule, Commute time, Reputation, Proximity to home/family, Cost of Living, Salary/Benefits, Research related to his engineering background, and "If we fit."