

## Match Violations in Urology: Proposed Solutions

During the Society of Academic Urology (SAU) annual meeting in February 2018, Program Directors (PDs) formed discussion groups on the topic of “How to Improve Upon the Current Match?” The attendees participated in rotating focus groups to discuss optimization of the urology match process as facilitated by Drs Michael Coburn (Baylor College of Medicine), Blake Hamilton (Utah School of Medicine) and Simone Thavaseelan (Brown University). The issue of match violations was discussed in this context and a SAU Task Force was created in March 2018 to investigate the nature and scope of the issue.

Ethical violations and discriminatory behavior in the National Resident Matching Process (NRMP) may not only violate employment law, but ultimately fails to serve the medical community well and introduces bias and inequity into the process of the match. As an independent matching institution, the American Urological Association (AUA) conducts the urology match on behalf of the SAU; yet the AUA Urology Match Guidelines do not adequately define nor address all aspects of the NRMP Code of Conduct, and violations continue to occur in the match process<sup>1-4</sup>. In a recent single institution retrospective survey studies, 26% of applicants were asked to reveal where they would rank a program and 19% reported that post interview communication caused the student to rank a program higher than initially planned.<sup>1</sup> Concerningly, gender disparities in discriminatory questions asked of urology applicants during residency interviews have been documented by Keeter et al with 85% of women reporting being asked about restricted topic of age, parental status and intent for future children; while 45% of men reported being asked about their opinions and rankings of other residency programs.<sup>2</sup>

Sebesta et al demonstrated that the degree of compliance with the NRMP Code of Conduct during the urology match process is worrisome: 13% of applicants reported verbal communication from programs and 19% felt misled by communications to believe they had a higher chance of matching at a program. Additionally, once again women applicants reported being asked discriminatory questions significantly more frequently than men.<sup>3</sup> 12% of applicants reported a post interview phone call from programs and 44% of applicants reported feeling obligated to do a second look in order to match at a program. Examining these issues from the point of view of PDs, Farber et al found that 81% of PDs felt promises made by applicants had no influence on their rank list and 52% stated that neither did second looks. In summary and concerningly, a number of single institution surveys report prohibited post interview communication and illegal interview questions occurring in the Urology Match demonstrating significant bias in the interview questions posed and the vulnerability of applicants in the process.

The aims of the *Match Violations: Proposed Solutions* Task Force work were to:

1. Thoroughly examine the prevalence and type of urology match violations;

2. Adequately define match violations based on the AUA Match Guidelines and the NRMP Code of Conduct;
3. Assess the existing NRMP policies and procedures on Match Violations and investigations in order to propose and recommend guidelines for the AUA/SAU Match regarding Match Violations including consequences for the same; and
4. Effect change at the level of the AUA and SAU that more effectively mitigates future violations, intentional or not.

The Task Force reviewed, analyzed and synthesized the data and relevant resources and produced a series of recommendations for the subspecialty to adopt:

**1. Revise the Urology Match Guidelines to adopt the NRMP Code of Conduct with regards to:**

- A. **Respecting an applicant’s right to privacy and confidentiality** and therefore, discouraging any program from asking applicants to disclose their rank intentions, programs and locations applied to (except for faculty mentors communicating with their own advisees).
- B. **Refraining from asking illegal or coercive questions** about age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and family status and instead focus on the applicant’s goodness of fit within the program.
- C. **Declining to require second visits** or imply that second visits are used in determining applicant placement on a rank order list.
- D. **Discouraging unnecessary post-interview communication.** PDs shall not solicit or require post-interview communication from applicants, nor shall program directors engage in post-interview communication that is disingenuous for the purpose of influencing applicants’ ranking preferences

**1. Maintain AUA Match Guidelines specifications on method of contact:**

	<b>Program</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
<b>Telephone</b>	Prohibited	Acceptable
<b>Email</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Letter</b>	Acceptable	Acceptable

2. Standardize the process of surveying applicants into **an annual post-match survey performed by AUA on behalf of the SAU to collect National Data regarding Match Violations** and the Match process in an ongoing fashion.
3. Establish and **publish an Anonymous Portal on the AUA Match website** for applicants or programs to report violations (drafted by task force).
4. Introduce a **signed electronic attestation for both PDs and applicants to attest to compliance with the Revised Match Guidelines upon entering the Match.**

5. Establish a SAU standing **Committee of Program Directors** of each AUA Section to investigate reported Match Violations and consider consequences of violations on a case-by-case basis based on 3 potential outcomes: Report only; Report and Request for Action Plan; Report to SAU.
6. **Provide Faculty Development** on their role in upholding ethical standards of conduct during the Match process particularly in regard to **standardizing the interview process based on performance-based interviewing** to minimize explicit and implicit bias.

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2. Keeter MK, Singal A, Demzik A, et al: Gender Based Differences in Discriminatory Questions Asked of Urology Applicants during Residency Interviews. Urology Practice 2018, doi: 10/1016/j.urpr.2018.02.002.
3. Farber N, Neylan C, Kaplan A, et al: The Urology Match Process and the Value of Post-Interview Communication for Program Directors. Accepted submission to Urology 2018.
4. Sebesta EM, Lipsky MJ, Nunez M, et al: The National Resident Matching Program Code of Conduct: What Is the Perceived Degree of Compliance During the Urology Match Process? Urology 2018; 122:37.
5. AUA website “Urology Residency Match Guidelines for Programs” Available at <http://www.auanet.org/education/auauniversity/residents/residency/urology-and-specialty-matches>

6. AUA website “Interview Process” Available at <http://www.auanet.org/education/auauniversity/residents/residency/urology-and-specialty-matches>
7. “NRMP Code of Conduct” Available at <http://www.nrmp.org/communication-code-of-conduct/>