

“You Can’t Sit with Us!”

As a resident, you made it! Your years of sweat and tears paid off, and most of you now are part of an institution, where you feel like you “belong.” I don’t know about you, but I think it feels pretty good. I’m going to relax and enjoy the view. What? Wait, what’s going on? I just got here, got comfortable, and now all of a sudden, there are late nights reviewing applications and precious time spent preparing for interviews. These new candidates not only want to be part of MY group, but they also want to kick me out as they enter. Part of me just wants to say, “No, you can’t sit with us!” Then, there is the reasonable and rational side of me that realizes that recruitment season is part of residency; we have to pass on the torch. Therefore, it is important to address skills that can help us all be efficient and cohesive in our approach. Our involvement as residents is essential: from sharing our experiences to helping dig interviewee cars out of snow. Here are a few best practices on approaching this wonderful season.

Objectively Scoring the Applications

Although I strongly object to hiring the guy who is wearing the exact same shoes as my ex-boyfriend, there is no place to note this on the institution’s “objective” scoring rubric. Obviously, the objective scores are provided to help us avoid bias. Subjective analysis of these applications can comprise of past interactions with candidates, what we may have heard from others in the field, or just a curious social media search. These are important points to note to determine “fit,” but it is crucial that we concentrate on the candidates’ scores given their CVs and letters.

Advice: Base your objective scoring on the performance of the candidates from descriptions in their letters of recommendation, career aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

Preparing for “The Meeting”

Residency candidates spend the days leading up to the interview fearing the unknown and questioning their own qualifications. They likely don’t even realize that we are also stressing about making sure their visit is an extremely positive one. At the University of Kentucky HealthCare, we have formed a Recruitment Committee. This group of individuals is responsible for setting up accommodations, meals, interview-day packets, and social outings for the candidates. Each resident plays an active role—from making interview invites to coordinating responsibilities for respective interview days. Be careful not to fall into a “too many cooks...” situation.

Advice: Delegate and frequently communicate with your team and candidates for a smooth recruitment season. If possible, review applicant documents *before* the interview to assess their personality and determine whether they would be a good “fit” for the program’s principles and vision.

What is this thing called time?

If someone could find the chemical structure for it and start producing it in a little white tablet, all of our issues would be solved. #Rxproblems

Residency itself is a time warp, and interview season forces you to re-prioritize your time-management dynamics (again). The second half of residency brings with it a sense of accomplishment and excitement—we are halfway through. Then we realize that we have data collection and abstracts due for research, our staffing duties have increased, and grand rounds and/or CE presentations are due soon. YIKES! Oh, and on top of all that, we have interviews 2–3 days a week. YIKES X 2! There goes your New Year’s resolution of maybe making it to the gym....

Advice: Mark out extra time on your calendar for applicant review. Each program wants the best candidates, and it is important to spend the time going through these applications with a fine-tooth comb. Create a checklist for interview-day prep ... the last thing you want to do is forget to pick up a candidate from the airport.

This is an EXCITING time of the year. The postgraduate hunt process is extremely rewarding for the profession and provides us with an opportunity to give back and marvel at how far we have come.

Finally, please remember ... not too long ago, we were in these candidates' shoes. Nervousness is part of the process, and as residents, we can often connect instantly and appease their jitters.

May the odds be ever in your favor!

About the author: Krutika N. Mediwala is a first-year pharmacy resident at the University of Kentucky HealthCare who is staying on for a second-year specialization in infectious diseases. Her passions in pharmacy include leadership, mentorship, and, of course, recruitment!