

CFMS Member Memo – October 10th

Dear Students,

We hope that you have all been staying safe and are doing well in this new academic year. Although there have been many challenges over the past few months, we are encouraged to see how well we have all adapted to this “new normal”.

We were happy to welcome nearly 300 members to our AGM that took place from September 19th-20th over Zoom. We elected the remainder of the 2020-2021 Board of Directors and have gotten straight to work in connecting, supporting, and representing medical students across Canada. We look forward to continuing to engage with you over this next year as we work to create opportunities out of the chaos.

Although the pace of changes to medical education has slowed down since the first few months of COVID-19, we wanted to update you on our work in coordination with the recent edition of the [AFMC Learner News](#) (direct quotes italicized).

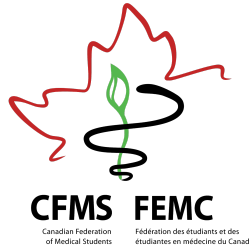
2021 R1 Match

Application Requirements:

Recommendations have included the number of reference letters, whether or not they should be structured; whether there need to be letters from specific disciplines to which the applicant is applying; the use of the MSPR template; additional ways to support the application process. The recommendations have been approved by the Standing Committee on Education. They will move forward for final approval by the AFMC Board of Directors at their meeting on October 27, 2020.

We know that many of you are anxious about what the R1 Match application requirements will look like this year, particularly with the lack of visiting electives, reduced time for electives and difficulties with capacity at your home schools. In consultation with the Class of 2021 Advisory Group, composed of Class of 2021 leadership at each of our member schools, we have been advocating at the AFMC Resident Matching Committee (ARMC) to adjust the application requirements to promote equity. We continue to advocate for a limit to the number of required reference letters. We are also advocating for programs to not be able to request specialty or site specific letters, as we recognize that this is not possible for all students. At the same time, this does not preclude you from using a reference letter from the specific specialty or site, but allows for more flexibility for students in a variety of situations. There have been some discussions surrounding the format of the reference letters this year through a subcommittee that our Director of Education, Avrilynn Ding, is a member of. This includes whether the letter should be free-form or structured. We are advocating for the letter format to remain as similar as possible to previous years given that many students have already started asking for letters and referees are expecting that the requirements will be similar to the past.

We recognize that the lack of concrete information regarding application requirements continues to be a point of anxiety for students, particularly as we get closer and closer to the opening of CaRMS Online. We continue to advocate to the AFMC that the decision be expedited and the requirements



made known as soon as possible to remove the uncertainty and allow you to plan out your application.

Program Promotion:

The [Canadian Residency Virtual Program Promotion Guide](#) was released on September 15th, 2020.

The [National Web calendar of events](#) is a centralized calendar of events that lets learners learn more about residency programs across the country.

A platform specifically for program promotion will be launched in November.

With the realities of no visiting electives and virtual interviews for the 2021 R1 Match, we know that there exists a lot of stress surrounding gaining exposure to programs and making an informed decision when it comes time to create your rank order list. We have been working with the AFMC and other stakeholders to develop various solutions to help support program promotion so that you are able to make as informed of a decision as you can. As program promotion events started being advertised over the summer, we discovered that the events were being advertised variably across the country. This meant that some students knew about certain events while others did not, despite the intended national scope of the events. In our advocacy, we have highlighted the importance of ensuring that there exists centralized resources to ensure that all students across the country have the same access to opportunities. This is critical in maintaining equity in the 2021 R1 Match. As a result of our collaborative efforts, a one-stop-shop for program promotion was endorsed and is currently being developed, with an expected launch in November.

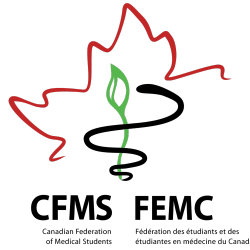
Understanding that in the meantime, there existed a need for a “band-aid” solution, the CFMS advocated to the AFMC to develop a resource to use in the interim, leading to the launch of the [National Web calendar of events](#) in late September.

We have also led the development of a [Virtual Program Promotion Guide](#) that highlights “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of program promotion this year. Some of you may wonder why activities like research projects or site visits are not allowed. Unfortunately, these opportunities may not be available to everyone, and so the various stakeholders mutually agreed to prohibit these types of activities to maintain as even of a playing field as possible. We also highlighted the need for events to be recorded and for programs to not use applicant attendance as a surrogate measure of program interest as we understand that students’ schedules vary and they should not be forced to participate in these events to increase their odds of matching.

Virtual Interviews:

The Virtual Interview and Program Recruitment Subcommittee of the ARMC has been working to develop interactive virtual interview handbooks for both programs and applicants. The subcommittee will use all available resources to create comprehensive handbooks that will help guide preparation for interviews.

This year will be the first year that the R1 Match will use virtual interviews across the board. We want to highlight the importance of having made decisions about cancelling visiting electives and having only virtual interviews early. Those decisions allowed us to make the best of the situation and plan in advance on how to optimize the realities of no visiting electives and virtual interviews.



For virtual interviews, the above mentioned subcommittee of the ARMC that I sit on has been working to develop handbooks for both programs and applicants. We continue to emphasize the importance of making sure the process is equitable. We hope to provide programs with detailed principles for them to consider in setting up their virtual interviews process, including considerations of equity, confidentiality, and contingency planning. We have seen what can go wrong when IT systems are not set up to handle high volumes of final year students, and so this remains an important point of advocacy to ensure that the interview process runs smoothly. We are also working to incorporate feedback from previous virtual interview situations, including for MUN students last year as well as experiences from medical school admissions.

2022 R1 Match

Timeline:

The 2022 R1 match timeline is being discussed by the ARMC. Efficiencies created for the 2021 timeline are being maintained where possible. Recommendations will be brought to the AFMC Board of Directors meeting October 27, 2020. A decision regarding the 2022 timeline is expected at that time.

We have worked with your Medical Student Society Presidents to advise on the 2022 R1 Match timeline. We know that there continues to be many schools that are delayed due to the interruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic which may lead to less time for electives than traditionally allowed. Furthermore, the efficiencies in the timeline created for the 2021 R1 Match represent significant progress in reducing the time taken by the R1 Match process and allowing students more time to develop as clinicians and explore their interests. We continue to advocate for the maintenance of these efficiencies and to have as similar of a match timeline to the 2021 R1 Match as possible.

Visiting Electives:

There are no visiting electives for the Class of 2022 at this time. The schools are eager to resume visiting electives, however no decision around recommendations for the resumption of visiting electives has been made at this time. This topic will be discussed by the AFMC Committee on Undergraduate Education at their upcoming meetings.

The CFMS continues to communicate to the AFMC and UG Deans about the importance of visiting electives for career planning. Although the decision has been made to cancel visiting electives for the 2021 class, we believe that a separate decision needs to be made for the 2022 class. We recognize the limitations that public health guidelines may impose on the practicality of visiting electives, but we will continue to advocate for their implementation if it becomes possible. Although we have developed many supports for program promotion, we strongly believe that visiting electives provide a more experiential and robust way for students to determine “fit” with programs.

Safety in Clerkship:

Although we are happy to hear that most students have returned/started safely in clinical settings, we continue to emphasize the importance of protecting the safety of students in our training. This is supported by the [Ten Guiding Principles for Medical Education](#) passed by the AFMC Board which includes adequate access to PPE. The times we currently find ourselves in can be stress-provoking,



as we worry not only about our own health, but also of our close family and friends. We encourage you to access resources provided by your Student Affairs office, your provincial medical association, the CFMS, and the CMA. As a medical education community we must come together to support physician/learner wellness.

AFMC Learner News:

As changes are discussed and made in medical education, we will continue to collaborate with the AFMC, UG Deans, and SA Deans to curate the Learner News to provide official updates from the AFMC on issues that matter to you. Please continue to reach out to your class representatives and Medical Student Society leadership to help guide the topics that are discussed. Furthermore, we will continue to provide these memos to provide further context to decisions and communicate our advocacy efforts on your behalf.

This year will come with many challenges, but I am confident that as a community, we will be able to overcome them and seize new opportunities that arise to drive progress in medical education.

As always, should you ever have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at president@cfms.org. I wish you all a happy thanksgiving with friends and family!

Sincerely,

Henry Li
MD Class of 2021, University of Manitoba
CFMS President 2020-2021



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