



Position on the Match System for Admissions to Medical Physics Residencies July 10, 2020

The Medical Physics Matching Program (the MedPhys Match) was created in 2014 in an effort to provide a fair system for institutions to recruit among top candidates competing for limited residency positions in the United States and Canada. Building on success of similar matching programs in medicine and other health professions, the MedPhys Match was developed to provide a fair a recruitment process on the part of both applicants and programs.

In the summer of 2019, support was solicited from CAMPEP residency program directors for an initiative to lobby the CAMPEP board to make participation in the MedPhys Match program a necessary requirement to maintaining accreditation with CAMPEP. It was proposed that such a requirement would ensure viability of the MedPhys Match in the long run and support the principles of a fair residency recruitment process. Canadian CAMPEP residency program directors solicited COMP with surveying Canadian stakeholders and providing a combined statement to CAMPEP.

This past year, COMP conducted two surveys of its members. The survey of the Canadian student body was conducted by the COMP Student Council and included 50 responses. The COMP Residency Program Directors subcommittee surveyed the 14 CAMPEP accredited residency programs currently existing in Canada. Their respective summaries and the survey results are included as an Appendix.

Based on these survey results, it is the position of COMP that while we encourage participation in the MedPhys match when it is viable to do so, we believe it should be up to the individual CAMPEP residency program directors to determine whether participating in the MedPhys match is appropriate for their program. The COMP board has investigated and thoroughly discussed this issue and recognizes that despite general student support, there remain legitimate barriers that may prohibit or hinder the participation of many Canadian centers. As such, COMP does not feel that programs should be rewarded or penalized for either participating in the MedPhys Match program or not.

We would like to reiterate COMP's support for CAMPEP and that COMP will continue to promote and support medical physics residency education programs and program directors with respect to the training and professional development of residents and residency program faculty. COMP will also continue to support students and residents by developing educational resources and training activities and providing a platform for open communication.

For more information, please contact Nancy Barrett, Executive Director of COMP at nancy.barrett@comp-ocpm.ca.

February 1, 2020

Dear COMP membership,

Last summer, the combined leadership of the AAPM Student & Trainee Subcommittee and the COMP Student Council wrote a letter to CAMPEP voicing concerns regarding the MedPhys Match (hereafter referred to as the Match). Briefly, the concern was that an increasing number of programs have been withdrawing from the match which leads to an environment where applicant's choices are more limited and decisions can be forced based on the fear of not matching, rather than being informed and educated. The referred letter was written largely from the perspective of the American landscape, one which is vastly different from the Canadian residency environment. The purpose of this letter is to present the Canadian perspective, based on a survey performed in late 2019 with responses from approximately 50 students and residents. We would like to acknowledge that the intent of this letter is to specifically present the perspective of the Canadian student body.

The makeup of those who responded to the survey included 56% who are currently enrolled in a Medical Physics graduate program, 32% are currently in a residency program, and 12% in a combination of either postdoc or industry streams. The majority of those who responded (62%) are interested in applying to residencies outside of MATCH. The main reasons included the fear of not matching to a residency program and the difficulty of finding a residency. Overall, the most common perspective of respondents was 'applying outside of MATCH helps keep options open'.

The most salient response was regarding the question: *"Would you support MATCH participation as a CAMPEP requirement for accreditation and maintenance of accreditation, even if it meant the reduction in the number of CAMPEP-accredited residencies?"* Respondents were able to choose between four answers: "Yes", "No, I feel that the current system works", "No, I would rather see positions across Canada and the USA advertised through the COMP website" or "I am indifferent". 16% supported the statement, only 24% of respondents felt that "The system works", while 52% would "... rather see positions advertised across Canada and the USA through the COMP website". Although this is not necessarily feasible due to the MedPhys Match, it is still indicative of a problem that Canadian trainees face.

Canadian trainees hold a relatively unique perspective when it comes to career progression in Medical Physics. The majority of Canadian institutions do not participate in the MATCH, which is the opposite of the American residency landscape. For numerous reasons, many Canadians (50% of survey respondents) are interested in American institutions (or at least, exploring the possibility). Unfortunately, it is difficult to both interview at Canadian institutions while also participating in the MATCH. Participation in the MATCH requires a commitment of accepting the position if one is successfully matched at an institution. This means that Canadians are often faced with the decision of not participating in the Match, thus losing the opportunity to educate themselves with respect to the American landscape, **or** opting-out of interviewing in Canada, because the Match commitment would bar them from accepting a position if they were offered one. We acknowledge that this is a consequence of substantially differing healthcare systems, however, we believe that coming to an agreeable solution that promotes some uniformity in residency application processes will be of benefit to the student body, and ultimately to the medical physics community.

The COMP Student Council is always striving to represent the concerns and viewpoints of graduate students undergoing medical physics studies, and we would like to thank everyone who completed the survey regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

André Diamant, Chair, COMP Student Council
Svetlana Kuznetsova, Vice Chair, COMP Student Council

November 25, 2019

Dear CAMPEP Board Members,

In July 2019, a letter from the program director and associate program director for the medical physics residency program at University of California – San Diego, was submitted to the Commission on the Accreditation of Medical Physics Education Programs (CAMPEP), asking CAMPEP to consider making participation in the MedPhys Match program a mandatory requirement for program accreditation. That letter was forwarded to all CAMPEP program directors, along with a request to indicate support of that letter. A second letter was also submitted from the AAPM Student and Trainee Subcommittee, and was co-signed by COMP Student Committee, expressing concerns that an increased number of programs are choosing not to participate in the matching program.

The MedPhys Match Program is operated by National Matching Services and was introduced as part of AAPM Professional Policy PP-28-A in July 2014, stating that “the American Association of Physicist in Medicine (AAPM) believes that a matching program is the best way to optimize the placement of qualified applicants into accredited residency programs. AAPM endorses a national matching program for medical physics residencies and encourages accredited programs and qualified applicants to participate.” The purpose itself, introduces some of the limitations of the match and aligns with concerns expressed by the large majority of Canadian programs, as the Match was designed to be a **national** matching program, and not an international matching program.

There are 14 accredited Medical Physics Residency Programs in Canada, several of which were among the first accredited residency programs. Historically, only a few Canadian residency programs have participated in the MedPhys Match. The idea of mandatory participation in the match would therefore have a large impact on CAMPEP-accredited Canadian Residency Programs, due to the current level of participation. To better understand this impact and construct an overview of the Canadian perspective on the Match and mandatory participation, a small survey was distributed to Program Directors of all residency programs accredited in Canada by CAMPEP. This survey was sent on behalf of the Residency Program Directors Sub-Committee, a new sub-committee of the COMP Education Committee.

The survey results reflected the diversity of the programs in Canada, with variable size, structure and funding schema. At this time, program directors of CAMPEP accredited medical physics residency programs in Canada are not supportive of a mandatory requirement for participation in the MedPhys Match. The spirit of the match is well intentioned and is supported by Canadian Program Directors, and we acknowledge that matching systems do work well in some contexts, including the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS), which is a national program for Canadian medical residency programs. However significant work would be required to allow for a functional matching Medical Physics Residency Program matching program in Canada, overcoming many barriers to current participation that have been identified by the programs.

Thank you for your consideration of the Canadian Residency Programs' perspective in your discussion of this proposal. An overview of the Canadian Programs and the detailed survey results are attached for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea McNiven, PhD, FCCPM

On behalf of the COMP Program Director Sub-Committee

Overview: Canadian Residency Programs

The survey was sent to 15 program directors or site directors. There are 14 residency programs accredited within Canada (13 therapy and 1 imaging), with another centre accredited as part of an American residency program. All program directors responded to emails on this topic, with 14/15 programs responding to the more in-depth survey.

The variability in these programs is large, with differences including:

- Single vs. Multi-Institution
- Hospital Based vs. Affiliated with University
- Fixed Start Dates vs. Flexible Start Dates
- Variable Funding Schemes for Residency Positions (variability in funding sources (e.g. provincial vs. employer) and funding stability)
- Variable local HR Policies and requirements
- Size of program ranging from 0.5 hires per year on average up to 6 new residents per year
- CAMPEP accreditation first received in 2000 - 2018

Out of the 15 programs total in Canada, 5 programs have participated in the Match previously. Two programs have participated in the Match for 5 years, while two participated for the first time in 2019. The fifth institution has an affiliated site in the US, for which the position is offered through the Match. Focusing on the programs offering positions at Canadian institutions, at this time, 3 out of the 4 programs offering positions in Canada plan to participate in 2020, with the fourth centre likely not hiring in 2020.

Survey Results: Canadian Program Opinion on Mandatory Participation

14 of the programs are NOT in favour of a mandatory requirement for participation as part of CAMPEP accreditation, with one in favour of the proposal. In general, programs support the spirit of the Match and its intent, but participation presents several logistical concerns, as identified in the summary of survey results below.

When asked to identify supporting reasons for their support or lack of support:

- 10/14 respondents felt that it is not within CAMPEP's mission to influence hiring practice or to coordinate recruitment through mandatory Match requirements
- 10/14 respondents identified that there are local issues with human resources or legality issues with the hiring process that would be a significant barrier to Match participation
- 10/14 respondents indicated a lack of a set start date for their program (current state is flexible intake) or fixed dates that do not align well with the Match timelines, could make Match participation logistically difficult
- 5/14 respondents indicated that the cost of Match participation is a factor or minor factor in their support for the premise
- 9/14 respondents indicated some level of concern or logistical consideration related to timing of the Match, commitment requirements and funding logistics. With variable funding structures for Residency Program positions across the country, logistics related to Match commitment, interviews, deadlines and hiring are a concern.

Other concerns highlighted by respondents:

- Although they favour the Match, and do think there is a long-term value in a national strategy towards this goal, it is too early to make the Match mandatory, as noted by the many logistical and administrative barriers
- Match participation would reduce flexibility to adjust program length if needed to align with certification exams and increase resident success for job applications post-residency
- Many are happy with their current recruitment success, are concerned that their success in recruitment may be impacted by a lack of flexibility in start date and a
- Increased (and potentially unneeded) increase in workload and costs for a small program
- That this proposal and the potential consideration of mandatory Match participation itself is a sign of a broken system