Proposal for OPDO Recommendations: Common Interview Offer Date

**Background:** The previous OPDO-suggested three-week interview release window for residency interviews was a well-intentioned effort to streamline the application process. The three-week duration, however, results in a prolonged period of applicant stress and anxiety and students sacrifice educational opportunities to navigate this complex process.2-4 Many programs are challenged by interview cancellations. In order to mitigate these challenges, several specialties have successfully implemented standardized interview offer dates with improved satisfaction of both applicants and programs.5 This year, OPDO recommends that Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery adopt the following the Common Interview Offer Date initiative.

**Programs should commit to the following:**

- Release all initial interview offers on November 5th, 2021 between 12 & 6 PM EST
- Limit interview invitations to the number of interview slots available
- Open interview scheduling on November 8th, 2021 at 12 PM EST
- If an applicant declines an interview or there is no response by November 9th, 2021, the program may extend an invitation to another applicant

**Applicants should commit to the following:**

- Do not attempt to schedule interviews until Monday, November 8th at 12 PM, 2021 EST
- Do not schedule or hold interview spots applicant does not plan on attending

**Rationale:**
Similar systems have been successfully employed by other specialty organizations, including plastic surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedic surgery, and urology. In addition, such an initiative has been recommended by the Undergraduate Medical Education to Graduate Medical Education Review Committee of the Coalition for Physician Accountability.6 We expect such a system would allow medical students to more fully engage in their educational objectives during the interview season, limit unnecessary stress and anxiety, and improve the efficiency of the interview scheduling process for programs.
References:


Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Are programs required to comply with the standardized otolaryngology – head and neck surgery interview offer dates?**
  No, although we hope that programs will voluntarily participate so that both applicants and programs are able to realize the benefits of a coordinated process. Students will be better able to engage in their scheduled educational opportunities and experience less stress resulting from a prolonged and uncertain interview offer period. Programs will likely experience less disruptions from last minute cancellations as applicants are able to schedule interviews with knowledge of their options.

- **Is there any evidence that this system is better than our current approach?**
  Very similar systems have been employed by dermatology, obstetrics and gynecology, orthopedic surgery, plastic surgery, and urology. Feedback from programs and applicants in these specialties has been positive. In addition, such a standardized approach has been identified as a recommendation from the Coalition for Physician Accountability Undergraduate Medical Education to Graduate Medical Education Review Committee (UGRC).

- **Why was Nov 5th chosen as the date for interview offers?**
  In years prior to the pandemic, the OPDO interview offer window ended in late October or early November. This date appeared most congruent with previous practices, while attempting to strike the balance between allowing sufficient time for holistic application
review and enough time between interview offers and interview dates to allow applicants
to travel to programs that are performing in-person interviews. A Friday date was chosen
to allow applicants to consider their offers during the ensuing weekend before making
acceptances.

- **Practically speaking, how should programs and applicants not accept/not attempt to schedule interviews between the offer being extended and Monday November 8th at 12 PM EST?**
  In the absence of a central scheduling service, there is no one-size fits all approach.
  When extending interview offers, programs should explicitly state how applicants should interact with the program to schedule their interviews. Several electronic interview scheduling programs are available for use and have been identified as best practice for scheduling. These include but are not limited to the ERAS system, Interview Broker, RezRate, and Thalamus. Individual links to access the scheduling system could be sent to applicants at the designated time.

- **How should programs go about managing unfilled interview slots or slots available following cancellation?**
  Other than the recommended minimum of 24 hours between the interview scheduling date (Monday November 8th at 12 PM EST) prior to extending an offer to an alternative applicant, programs are free to choose whichever methods they have found effective for managing these issues.