SUO/AADO/OPDO Statement regarding Medical Student Interviews for Otolaryngology Residency
June 3, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, we all continue to make many adjustments. This has affected every aspect of our lives. As people entrusted with training future physicians and leaders, it is especially important to remain attentive and flexible, rising to meet the challenges as we anticipate or realize them. Among the challenges we are seeing with the new academic year, this includes ways to facilitate the Otolaryngology residency interview processes under current and anticipated constraints.

A number of challenges have already been realized, and the timing of relief from varying institutional, department, and regional restrictions are still in evolution. This has created ongoing uncertainty around the process for residency interviews. This uncertainty amplifies any concerns that are already felt around a successful match process by all stakeholders during the pre-COVID timeline.

Furthermore, institutional policies may prohibit student travel for safety reasons, as they are already limiting visiting rotations for the same concerns. The collective effect of these and other factors may create unintentional inequity among students and Departments as they consider the interview process.

The interview process cannot be underestimated in terms of the importance to our specialty, which is important for the public good. This is being faced by every medical specialty, and we should ensure that our voice is heard as well. It is vital for our educational community to be unified and unanimous in our recommendations.

SUO/AADO/OPDO recommends that the interview process should be a virtual process this year for all programs. Among the reasons why this is being recommended:

1. This promotes a safe environment for interaction between students, faculty, and staff.
2. It removes the risk of travel for students, which will vary depending on the region and method of travel.
3. Many existing and potential inequities that should not factor into the interview process for students and departments can be reduced – if not removed -- by moving to a virtual method.
4. This will provide logistic benefits, admittedly with new logistic challenges, but still enabling the interview process.
5. The virtual interactive processes that we have had to adopt in our personal and professional lives has created a better understanding of the virtual environment. While we all continue to learn and adapt, this experience serves to better equip all of us to move into a virtual interview
environment, a move that has been discussed and implemented to varying degrees by different groups.

6. Given the financial strain and uncertainty on all parties during this time, this move would help provide some relief by significantly reducing the costs all around associated with the interview process.

Where some logistic challenges are alleviated, others arise in concert. We remain committed to helping all of you as members of our Community. We also appreciate the ongoing dialogue around this and other issues being faced by our members, and the broader medical community. Feedback, best practice, and other suggestions regarding these potential changes are requested and welcomed.

Please circulate to your students, clerkship directors, faculty and Deans as you see fit.

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