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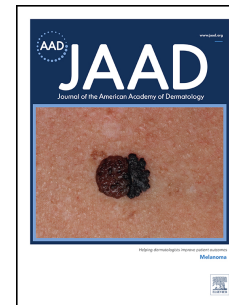
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1 Title: Dermatology Resident Selection: Shifting Toward Holistic Review?

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1 To the Editor,

2 Dermatology is one of the most competitive specialties, yet one of the least diverse.¹ According
3 to the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), underrepresented in medicine (UIM)
4 refers to racial/ethnic populations that are underrepresented in medicine relative to the general
5 population.² When compared to other specialties, dermatology was one of the least diverse,
6 second only to orthopedic surgery despite evidence showing a diverse physician workforce is
7 correlated with increased patient satisfaction and improvement in healthcare disparities.¹ The
8 current resident selection process places significant emphasis on “objective” measures of
9 academic performance such as USMLE scores, AQA membership, and grades, especially during
10 the prescreening process where programs receive hundreds of applications for limited open
11 positions. The three-step USMLE was created to provide a unified path to medical licensure and
12 its secondary use for resident selection has become an unintended consequence. In light of this
13 and other concerns over student learning and well-being, the USMLE announced a change from
14 reporting a three-digit numeric score to pass/fail effective January 1, 2022.

15 Induction into AQA can positively impact career trajectory and is associated with: increased
16 likelihood of matching into the specialty of choice, a career in academic medicine, and attaining
17 the rank of full professor, dean or departmental chair³; however, several studies have pointed to
18 racial disparities, with Caucasian students more likely to be selected when compared to UIM
19 students.⁴ Given the recent changes in USMLE score reporting and established bias in receiving
20 AQA designation, how then should we approach selecting the next generation of dermatologists?

21 Increasing diversity has become a priority within the dermatology national leadership. The
22 authors propose reexamination of “historical” residency selection criteria with a shift to a more

23 holistic approach to increase diversity and positively impact our future workforce. Holistic
24 review has been implemented in over 90% of medical schools; however, evidence that this has
25 been widely adopted by dermatology residency programs is lacking. According to the AAMC,
26 holistic review involves an individualized way of assessing an applicant's capabilities through
27 balanced consideration of experiences, attributes, and academic metrics (EAMs). This approach
28 still incorporates important metrics such as grades, exam scores, publications, and clerkship
29 performance; however, these are balanced with other important aspects and achievements such
30 as distance traveled (the applicant's personal and professional journey that led them to
31 dermatology), commitment to addressing healthcare disparities, leadership, volunteerism and
32 other life experiences.⁵

33 The authors recognize the use of holistic review may present unique challenges, particularly in
34 developing a comprehensive system for review of large numbers of applications, and given each
35 residency program is unique in its mission, values, and educational training opportunities.
36 However, dermatology as a specialty, must have a robust discussion on how best to implement
37 holistic review, with emphasis on defining the experiences, attributes and metrics that would
38 more strongly predict a resident's performance and reflect their professionalism and commitment
39 to the specialty. By taking a more holistic approach, there is potential for selecting an
40 exceptionally diverse group of trainees and future leaders who will truly enrich our specialty.

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