

# Memorandum



**To:** Deborah Spitz, MD, Chair, Organization of Program Director Associations  
**From:** Orly Avitzur, MD, MBA, FAAN, President, American Academy of Neurology  
**Copy:** Emily Poole Pharr, MD, Chair, Consortium of Neurology Program Directors (CNPD); Erica A. Schuyler, MD, FAAN, Past Chair, CNPD; Logan D. Schneider, MD, Chair, Graduate Education Subcommittee; Gauri V. Pawar, MD, FAAN, Vice-Chair, GES  
**Date:** January 19, 2022  
**Subject:** COPA Recommendations—AAN Response to Request

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The American Academy of Neurology's (AAN) Consortium of Neurology Program Directors (CNPD) submits the following response to the request from The Organization of Program Director Associations (OPDA) regarding the recommendations from the Coalition for Physician Accountability's Undergraduate Medical Education—Graduate Education Review Committee (UGRC).

This response reflects input from members of the CNPD from an open call for comment. The members were asked whether the three groups of recommendations presented by OPDA were in fact the most important to Neurology residency programs and how each of these groups of issues are being addressed.

There is agreement amongst Neurology Program Directors that COPA recommendations #21 and #22 addressing interview season standards are a high priority; as is recommendation #23 addressing the volume of residency applications. However, recommendations #28 and #29 addressing the interface of UME/GME preparedness are less of a priority because our residents complete at least a preliminary year before beginning Neurology specific training.

Recommendations #21 and #22: The respondents agree that there should be guidance and consensus around standards of communication between applicants and programs. We feel there should be clear direction for programs regarding interview etiquette (not offering more interviews than interview slots, for example). We also agree that ongoing study of the impact of virtual interviewing is vital as we decide how to move forward in subsequent years.

The AAN published a [consensus statement](#) supporting virtual interviews for the 2021–2022 interview season. This consensus statement was reviewed and supported by the AAN's Education Committee; Graduate Education Subcommittee; Undergraduate Education Subcommittee; Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism, and Social Justice Subcommittee; Consortium of Neurology Program Directors; and the Consortium of Neurology Clerkship Directors.

Recommendation #23: One of the biggest factors impacting Neurology Residency Program Directors in the era of virtual interviews has been an increased volume of applications. We support efforts to pilot innovative approaches to help programs gauge applicant interest and to reduce the burden of excessive applications for applicants.

The CNPD holds monthly "conversation corners" during which an average of 40 Program Directors meet virtually to discuss issues affecting Neurology residency training programs. Often discussed is the issue of increased volume of applications. At the most recent meeting, we invited our colleagues from Otolaryngology to share their experiences with a pilot in preference signaling, which generated interest in further research into this approach for other residency programs. CNPD leadership plans to attend the ERAS information session about the supplemental application pilot as well. However, recognizing the

unprecedented changes affecting the interview process, the consensus was enthusiastic, yet cautious, highlighting the importance of well-designed pilot programs and dissemination of study results/best practices as outlined in the OPDA recommendations.

Regarding potential support from OPDA for Neurology Program Directors, we request:

1. Creation and/or support of large-scale pilot programs to explore ways to reduce application bloat (preference signaling, for example).
2. Advocating for discussion addressing methods programs can use to identify candidates who are well suited for their programs, particularly as objective measures of performance such as class rank and USMLE scores are becoming less available (supplemental applications, standardized letters of support, standardized MSPE, for example).
3. Clear guidance regarding appropriate communication between applicants and programs during interview season.
4. Continued research into the impact of virtual interviews on both applicants and programs.
5. An early and definitive statement regarding virtual vs in-person interviews and post-interview visits for the 2022–2023 interview season.

Please contact Lucy Persaud, Associate Director, Trainee Education, at [lpersaud@aan.com](mailto:lpersaud@aan.com) with any questions.