

The Adult Reconstructive Hip and Knee Fellowship Match Program and The Musculoskeletal Oncology Fellowship Match Program

In order to assist orthopaedic residents to obtain a fellowship in adult reconstruction or musculoskeletal oncology in an orderly way, and for fellowship programs to obtain fellows in these specialties, the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS), the Hip Society (HS), the Knee Society (KS) and the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society (MSTS) have established this Fellowship Match Program. The Match is vital to the future of our specialties, and the leadership of these organizations, as well as the leadership of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) are fully committed to doing whatever is necessary to make the Match Program a success.

This Match Program was developed by a Task Force established by the four organizations, kindly assisted by other orthopaedic societies which had already established matches, that provided advice and sample documents.

The Match is governed by a Match Oversight Committee composed of Representatives and alternates from each of the four organizations, and a chair elected by the Committee. The match is administered by the AAHKS Staff, and the AAHKS Executive Director, Robert A. Hall, CAE, is the match administrator. Bob may be contacted at bob@aaahks.org, at 847-384-4373 (direct line) or after hours at home at 224-567-8011. He will be happy to answer any of your questions.

The Match will use the services of the San Francisco Match (www.sfmatch.org) to provide the match website and matching services. The Adult Reconstructive Fellowships and the Tumor Fellowships will be listed separately on the SFMatch website for the convenience of the residents, but have joined together in this match for administrative purposes.

The Match Timeline is as follows:

June 8, 2009: Deadline for Adult Reconstructive Fellowships and Musculoskeletal Tumor Fellowships to join the match by submitting a signed program agreement, a fee of \$400 and an Excel Spreadsheet with all required program information to the AAHKS Office. The \$400 annual fee covers the fee charged per program by the SFMatch (\$125), the expenses of the Match Oversight Committee, and a small portion of the expenses of AAHKS in administrative costs of AAHKS in administering the Match Program. As of the deadline, a strong majority of programs had signed up to participate in the Match.

June 17, 2009: AAHKS Submits the list of participating programs to the SFMatch, along with the required fee, and a combined Excel Spreadsheet with the information from all participating programs. Note that once AAHKS submits the program list and spreadsheet, the SFMatch charges an additional \$250 for programs to join the match. They will make no exceptions.

July 15, 2009: A list of Participating Programs and a standard Match Application will be posted on the AAHKS Website (www.aahks.org).

September 1, 2009: Residents will be able to log on to www.sfmatch.org, select the Adult Reconstructive/Musculoskeletal Tumor Fellowship Program and register for the Match. There is a \$50 fee to register. Once registered, residents will review the Fellowship Programs in the Match, and will list which programs they are applying to. They may add additional programs later.

Residents will then send a completed standard application and other required materials to the programs they wish to apply to.

Programs may start contacting residents for the purpose of scheduling interviews.

November 1, 2009: Fellowship Programs may start interviewing residents.

March 31, 2010: Interviews must be concluded. Fellowship Programs may, if they wish, interview in a narrower range of dates, but may not interview before November 1, 2009 or after March 31, 2010.

Programs and Residents may have no contact after the interviews other than to say thank you for coming to an interview/interviewing me, except that Programs may initiate or respond to contact with applicants as a courtesy, to restate their interest in the applicant and to provide additional information regarding the fellowship program. No commitments as to ranking or selecting a program or resident may be made or asked for.

April 15, 2010: Ranking Day. Residents go on the SFMatch website and rank order the programs they have interviewed with. Programs go on the website and rank order the residents they have interviewed.

The more residents/programs you rank, the better your chances of getting a match.

May 1, 2010: Match Day! The SFMatch runs their computer matching program and the results of the Match are posted.

Post Match Day: Programs or Residents which did not match are free to seek each other out to establish Fellowships.

Next year, the timeline should be similar, though residents may be able to register with the SFMatch earlier than September 1. Watch www.aahks.org for details.

General Rules for Fellowship Programs and Fellowship Program Directors:

Applicants cannot be asked how they will rank their fellowship program or other training programs.

Programs may not request an applicant's commitment to a program prior to the Match.

Programs will avoid contact with applicants between the interview and the match date, especially in ways that may be viewed as active recruitment tactics, pressure tactics or bargaining for a position. Return visits after the interview are not to be requested or required by the program. Programs may initiate or respond to contact with applicants as a courtesy, to restate their interest in the applicant and to provide additional information regarding the fellowship program.

Rank lists must remain confidential.

The match is a binding commitment between the applicant and the institution, contingent on satisfactory completion of prerequisite training and any explicitly stated special requirements of your program.

Post-match vacancies may be filled by direct negotiation. However, programs will not fill vacancies with any unauthorized agreements made prior to the match, and will not attempt to fill vacancies with an applicant already matched elsewhere unless the applicant has obtained a formal written release from the matched program.

Match violations are reported to the Match Administrator. The Match rules will be enforced and any and all violations investigated and determination of penalty is at the discretion of Match Oversight Committee and the four organizations.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Match

1) Suppose I match, but later I decide to seek a position offered in another match, can I drop this match and continue with the other match?

Answer: No. certification of your rank list indicates that you agree to withdraw from all competing matches.

2) Can I obtain a position without an interview?

Answer: Generally not, unless the program director waived the interview requirement.

3) A program director seems to solicit a commitment before the match. What should I tell him?

Answer: You may say anything you are comfortable with. When you complete your confidential rank list, you must remember that any statements you may have made do not constitute binding commitments. You are free to change your preference at any time. By the same rule, program directors are also free to change their preference after interviewing more applicants.

4) If I rank a program as #10 and another applicant rank it as #1, who will get that program?

Answer: When two applicants compete for the same program, the program's list decides.

5) One program director tells me that he likes me very much. Some better programs are noncommittal. Which program should I rank first?

Answer: By all means, list the more desirable program first. Your request will first go to the program you ranked highest. Skipping (or downgrading) the better program eliminates your chance of being considered there, while it does not improve the chance that others will accept you. There is no risk in listing high on your list programs that you like well, but for which you may have little chance.

6) A program director told me that he would “rank me high” does that mean a guaranteed position?

Answer: Certainly not. If you are #8 of 50 or 80 applicants, you are certainly “ranked high”. Yet, if that program fills at #7, you are still out of luck. It is always wise to list additional programs as a safeguard, as long as you would rather go there than remain unmatched.

7) Can I withdraw from the position I accepted through the Match?

Answer: No. Your signature on your rank list makes the match result a binding commitment. Withdrawal is possible only in exceptional circumstances and requires written approval from your program director.

8) Can I end up being matched to a program I do not really like?

Answer: No. Your placement request will go only to programs you have listed. If you do not like a program, you should not list it. The Matching Program processes your rank list like a stockbroker processing written orders from a client. In doing so, the stockbroker does not question the client’s judgment and obviously cannot guarantee that the client will be satisfied with the stock’s performance over the next several years. Similarly, the Matching Program does not question your judgments and cannot, in any way, guarantee that you or the program director will remain satisfied with each other’s performance. Indeed, in the years between your interview and the completion of your residency, changes in their faculty, in funding, or even in accreditation. The Matching Program promises you diligence processing your rank list, but neither it nor its sponsoring organization can accept any responsibility whatsoever for any such changes or for their consequences.