Reply to Response to: "Reliability of self-reported data on social media vs National Residency Match Program charting outcomes for dermatology applicants"

To the Editor: We thank Dr Lewis and colleagues for their comments on our study.[1] The change of the Step 1 examination to pass/fail will have widespread implications for future prospective dermatology applicants. Nonetheless, we believe social media will still be a valuable source of information for students, given the breadth of applicant information offered, much of which is not provided by the National Residency Match Program. Combined with its easy accessibility, convenience of use, regularly updated information, and solicited advice, social media will continue to serve the needs of dermatology applicants.

The modification of Step 1 to pass/fail, while a change in a positive direction, may not alter the application process to an entirely holistic process. We believe residency programs still need an objective measure to compare applicants and gauge their competitiveness, because dermatology residency slots are still limited and the applicant pool is increasing every year. More likely, there may be an increasing emphasis on Step 2, which will essentially replace Step 1 as a measure of preclinical competence. Furthermore, clerkship grades may become even more important. With this in mind, predicting the areas of emphasis residency programs will place on applicants is still difficult. Networking, research years, away rotations, clerkship grades, letters of recommendation from the specialty, and other holistic measures of evaluation may increase in importance as well, and all of this information is available on social media and not from the National Residency Match Program.

Regardless of the new selection criteria of dermatology residency programs, we anticipate social media will continue to grow in popularity and meet the needs of applicants. Online platforms are easily modifiable and run by students who are cognizant of the needs of fellow applicants. As such, social media is able to quickly adapt to changing metrics of evaluation and include information students feel is appropriate in providing a holistic picture of applicants.

In summary, it is difficult to predict the future selection criteria of dermatology residency programs. Social media will, nonetheless, continue to grow in popularity, as they provide both objective academic metrics and holistic data on applicants that is otherwise not available through NRMP. Lastly, it is easily modifiable to suit the needs of students.

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