

Post-CaRMS Match Panel 2025

Sep 18th, 2025, Panel and Discussion with PGY1s: Dr. Cathy Wang (Western), Dr. Zizo Al-Daqqaq (Ottawa), Dr. Aalya Hamouda (McGill).

Total number of participants: 40

Session Overview

Newly matched urology residents shared their experiences applying through CaRMS, navigating electives, preparing applications, and adjusting to residency.

Early Career Decisions and Specialty Choice

Several residents decided on urology early in medical school, while others explored different surgical or medical specialties before committing. Common reasons for choosing urology included:

- A balance of clinic and operative work.
- Minimally invasive and technologically evolving procedures (e.g., robotics, new BPH treatments).
- A culture that blends seriousness with approachability and humor.
- The opportunity to make immediate, quality-of-life-improving interventions for patients.
- A manageable lifestyle compared to some other surgical disciplines, with fewer emergencies (torsion, priapism, transplant).

Residents emphasized the importance of taking time in medical school to explore multiple specialties, understand the type of anatomy and workflow you enjoy, and ultimately follow what feels most rewarding.

Electives and Networking

Students described the electives portal as highly competitive and sometimes unpredictable. Program directors often have limited control over elective allocations. Key recommendations included:

- Apply broadly, and don't be discouraged if you cannot rotate at a particular school as urology is a small community, and word travels.
- If you cannot secure an elective at a program you're interested in, reach out respectfully to express interest; engagement can lead to interview opportunities.
- Use electives to both **showcase your abilities** and **evaluate program fit**. Confidence, preparation, and authenticity stand out.
 - o Electives can be stressful and it may feel like you are constantly being evaluated, but remember that you are also evaluating the program.
- Attend urology conferences to meet residents and staff; networking can be valuable for both mentorship and exposure.
- Electives and reference letters remain the most important aspects of the CaRMS

application.

- Research experience strengthens an application but is not essential. Applicants should be familiar with any publications they list, as programs may ask detailed questions about them.

A cited resource summarized these insights: *What Program Directors Look for in Urology Applicants*. <https://cuaj.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/6191/4454>.

Preparing your Application

Personal Statements:

- **Focus on authenticity and storytelling.** Describe how your experiences led you toward urology.
- Connect personal interests, skills, and values to traits valued in the specialty.
- The statement should be clear and professional but doesn't need to be poetic or overly elaborate.
- A well-written personal statement or exceptional reference letter can sometimes help applicants secure interviews at programs where they haven't rotated.
- Applicants applying to multiple programs can adapt one core narrative while tailoring closing paragraphs to each school.
- Have both close colleagues and less familiar reviewers provide feedback.
- Avoid over-stressing about the personal statement; it won't make or break your application unless it's exceptional or poorly written.

Reference Letters:

- Request letters early, ideally in person, but email requests are acceptable when necessary.
- Ask for more than the required number as some schools request up to five letters.
- Send polite reminders about two to three weeks before the deadline, and again one week before if needed.
- Choose writers who know you in multiple contexts (e.g., clinical, academic, research) for stronger, more detailed letters.
- It is common for letters to be submitted very close to deadlines, so plan accordingly.
- During electives, staff often anticipate being asked for a letter; it helps to express interest early and maintain communication throughout the rotation. This allows staff to observe you more closely and strengthen their evaluations.
- **Even when a letter feels "guaranteed," there is always a chance it may fall through.** Writers can be away, forget, or submit late, so secure more letters than you need as backup.

Additional Advice:

- Some residents found it effective to be transparent about program preference (e.g., explicitly stating a top choice) when sincerely committed.
- Programs may ask about your background (hometown, medical school, family ties) to understand fit and future intentions.

Francophone Programs

For students considering francophone streams:

- Université de Montréal, Sherbrooke, and Laval place greater emphasis on research experience.
- Interviews at these programs may focus heavily on past projects and future research goals.
- Sherbrooke and Laval serve larger rural populations.
- UdeM accepts English applications, whereas Sherbrooke typically requires French materials.

Competitiveness and Match Statistics

There are roughly **35 urology residency positions in Canada** each year. The competitiveness of the match fluctuates with each cohort, so applicants were advised to focus less on statistics and more on program fit, effort, and persistence.

2026 R-1 Main Residency Match - first iteration

Quota Overview by University

UNIVERSITY	CMG STREAM	REGULAR STREAM	IMG STREAM	COMPETITIVE ROS STREAM
Dalhousie University	2			
Université Laval		2		
Université de Sherbrooke		2		
Université de Montréal		2		
McGill University		1		
University of Ottawa	3		1	
Queen's University	2			
NOSM University	2			
University of Toronto	4		2	
McMaster University	3			
Western University	3			
University of Manitoba	2			
University of Alberta	3			
University of British Columbia	3			1
Total	27	7	3	1

Q&A Insights

- Electives and reference letters are the most important parts of the application; research adds value but is not essential.
- Know every detail on your CV—programs may ask about publications even if you are a secondary author.
- Programs may ask about your background or connections to gauge fit.
- Being transparent about your top-choice program can be effective if you are certain.
- The application and interview process can feel evaluative but remember you are also assessing programs for your own fit.
- Residency is busy but enjoyable when you are doing what you love—maintaining balance and authenticity is key.

Panel Contacts & Expertise

Happy to answer emails: aalya.hamouda@mail.mcgill.ca

Happy to connect if you have questions about urology/residency: z.aldaqqaq@mail.utoronto.ca