

# Fireside Pre-CaRMS Chat 2026

Jan 12th, 2026, Panel and Discussion with Residents: Dr. Jethro Kwong (PGY4 U of T) & Dr. Stacy De Lima (PGY2 Dal). ~20 participants.

## Session Overview & Speaker Background

Panel with urology residents from Dalhousie University and the University of Toronto discussing CaRMS applications, interviews, program fit, and residency experiences.

**Stacey De Lima** is a PGY2 at Dalhousie University and completed medical school in Calgary, which doesn't have a urology program.

**Jethro Kwong** is a PGY4 at University of Toronto and completed his medical school in Toronto.

## Why Urology?

- Compared with other surgical specialties, urology generally has better patient outcomes and more immediately helpful interventions.
- There are fewer true emergencies, and call burden improves over time.
- Short procedures (e.g., placing a stent) can significantly help very sick patients.
- Urology offers a wide variety of technical skills, including scoping, laparoscopy, and robotic surgery.
- Skills include reading imaging and labs while collaborating with other specialties (e.g., nephrology, infectious diseases).
- Residents expressed relief not being in specialties with prolonged overnight work and poor patient outcomes.

## What Matters for CaRMS Applications

- Clinical abilities are extremely important for CaRMS applications.
- Research does not trump clinical ability.
- Demonstrating basic interest in urology through research is sufficient.
- Even with extensive research experience (e.g., a PhD), most interview questions focus on clinical abilities and clinical judgment rather than research.
- Programs value applicants as whole people, not just academic profiles.
- Hobbies listed on the CV are commonly discussed, including why applicants enjoy them.

## Differentiating & Evaluating Programs

- Applicants struggling to differentiate between programs may benefit from creating a spreadsheet that includes programs applied to, interview offers, number of residents, program director, location, and program highlights.
- Going away for residency depends on life circumstances and who is moving with you.

- Personal relationships and support systems play an important role in residency decisions.
- Reflecting on these factors can help when constructing a rank list.
- Speaking with both junior and senior residents is helpful:
  - Junior residents manage pagers and day-to-day tasks.
  - Senior residents can reflect on training quality, interests, and program strengths and weaknesses.

## Preparing for CaRMS Interviews

- Prepare interview examples mapped to CANMEDS roles.
- Include both positive and challenging experiences, as interviews are not limited to successes.
- Practice interviews with peers applying to different programs, not just urology.
- Provide feedback to each other on what makes answers clear versus confusing.
- Know standard questions well, including “tell me about yourself,” “why urology,” and “why this program.”
- Know your application thoroughly.
- Identify a few (3) key strengths you want programs to remember and ensure these come through in your answers.

## Interview Format and Question Style

- Interviews are generally not designed to trick applicants.
- There may be an ethical question.
- There may be a clinical reasoning question designed to assess how you think through a problem.
- Examples include prioritizing multiple patients with different levels of severity and explaining who you would see first and why.
- Focus on demonstrating your thought process rather than arriving at a specific answer.
- Keep answers concise but avoid fixating on exact timing.

## How Programs Remember Applicants

- Programs remember applicants they like and applicants they have met previously.
- Programs also notice whether applicants are enjoyable to work with, work hard, and are people others want to be around.
- Programs remember who has rotated, attended conferences (e.g., CUA), or has been discussed within the urology community.
- Continued communication with residents can be helpful when applicants feel conflicted about programs.
- Applicants may still be remembered even if electives occurred well before CaRMS interviews.

## Understanding Program Culture & Fit

- Residents within the same program may have different perspectives and experiences.
- Understanding how program leadership responds to resident feedback is important.
- Programs are evolving based on resident priorities and feedback; rigid programs that do not adapt may be less appealing.
- Program directors can change, so applicants should avoid relying too heavily on one individual.
- Speaking with residents who have left a program can provide useful insight.
- Looking at diversity among staff opinions and career paths can help assess fit.

## Program-Specific Structure & Training

### Dalhousie

- Urology is its own department, separate from general surgery.
- Urology can book waitlist/elective cases while on call.
- High on-call case volume (stones, TURPs, TURBTs).
- Coverage includes most of Nova Scotia and parts of New Brunswick starting in R2.
- Buddy call system for R1/R2 residents.
- Very busy service with multiple ORs and clinics.
- Limited research support but improving.
- Transplants are generally done during daytime hours.
- Overall transplant lifestyle in Halifax was described as good.

### University of Toronto

- Surgeon Scientist Training Program allows pausing residency during PGY2–PGY3.
- Strong robotic training and exposure to complex cases.
- Training prepares residents well for independent practice and fellowship matching.
- Faculty actively advocates for residents.
- The residents are described as a tight-knit group.
- Leadership under the new PD was described as receptive to change.

## Ranking & Matching

- Many programs have a general sense of applicant ranking before interviews.
- Interviews may not significantly change rankings unless there are major concerns.
- Final rank list construction varies by program (resident input, PD decision, or both).
- Applicants should remember that they control their own rank lists.
- A program's top-ranked applicants may not rank that program highly, affecting match outcomes.

## Interview Advice

- Technical issues during interviews can happen.
- Staying calm and adaptable is important.
- If you attended and participated, minor issues are unlikely to negatively affect you.

## Speaker Contacts

[Jethro.kwong@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:Jethro.kwong@mail.utoronto.ca)

[Stacyg.delima@gmail.com](mailto:Stacyg.delima@gmail.com)