Resident Recruitment Interview Scoring and Rank System
Laura Walker; Grant P. Sinson; Sean M. Lew, MD
Department of Neurosurgery, Neurosurgery Residency Program, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Problem
The National Resident Match Program (NRMP) application requirements provide program directors with valuable information to aid in selecting applicants for interviews. It is then up to the program to assign a rank to each interviewed applicant and submit to the NRMP for The Match. The number of candidates selected to interview depend on the program. For many programs, this translates into a significant number. In keeping with NRMP rules, programs must rank each interviewed applicant in order of first choice to last, including the option to not rank at all. Given the nuances of interviews in general and varying opinions of faculty interviewers, programs often struggle with a method to determine a rank order.

Previously, the Department of Neurosurgery utilized a system of faculty discussion after each interview session to rank applicants by direct comparisons to each other, followed by votes. Applicants from that day were then ‘folded-in’ to previous day applicants by similar direct comparison and votes. Weakness of this process were identified:
• Not all faculty interviewed all days, making direct comparison votes inaccurate.
• Vocal or passionate faculty appeared to have greater influence in decisions compared to more passive faculty.
• There was no opportunity to adjust ranking in a transparent, democratic way when new information (e.g. Step 2 score, additional recommendation, personal recommendation, 2nd visit) became available after the day of the interview.

Finally, as we neared completion of our interview process, the discussion sessions could become quite lengthy. We sought to construct a process to provide an equal voice for all faculty, maintain fair assessment of applicants, and improved efficiency.

Approach
During the 2019 recruitment season, our program selected 40 out of 261 applicants to interview and interviewed 37. Overall, 9 of 11 residents, 13 of 14 clinical faculty, and 6 non-clinical faculty participated in the interviews. Only 3 faculty interviewed all applicants. Each interviewer recorded a score for each applicant based on the following scoring systems:
• Exceptional; 3-Very good, would be happy to match; 2-Average; 1-below average but better than scrambling; and 0-do not rank. A single decimal point was permitted. Any interviewer can change their own score for a candidate in response to new information. The composite faculty score is weighted 2x that of the composite resident score.

Results reported:
• Mean number of faculty who scored candidates was 9.4
• Mean number or residents who scored candidates was 3
• Mean candidate score was 2.55; for faculty it was 2.54, for residents 2.58
• The top 5 candidate composite scores ranged from 3.61-3.85

Lessons Learned
Although the process involved recording and tabulating a considerable number of scores, it was not difficult nor terribly time-consuming and the outcome resulted in an agreeable rank list for faculty and residents. The system also provided interviewers with a means of understanding his/her own scoring habits as compared with their peers. Finally, the scatter plot provides a visual means of easily detecting outliers. In the future, if outliers are significant, the data may be normalized prior to finalizing the rank list.

Significance
Involving residents and faculty in resident recruitment is important; however, their varied opinions of candidates can make establishing a rank order difficult. The scoring process described here allows equal participation, and because it is transparent, the result is an agreeable rank order.

Figure. Scoring ratio for each of the 26 interviewers