Objectives

1. Overview of residency application and the CaRMS process

2. Preparation of documents for application to residency
   ✓ Curriculum Vitae
   ✓ Personal Letters
   ✓ Reference Letters

3. Q & A Session
What is CaRMS?

- The Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) is a non-profit organization that collects the electronic application documents and runs the algorithm for the match program for entry into postgraduate medical residency programs in Canada.
  - It helps students to match to their residency training program of choice and helps program directors select the students of their choice.

- The CaRMS website offers a wealth of resources to help you navigate the match process, eligibility criteria, university program information, statistics on the previous year’s match results, etc.
  - It is very important to familiarize yourself with the Applicant Timetable during the summer before you begin 4th year.

- Mark your calendar!: Wednesday, July 20th, 2016
  - A CaRMS Relations Officer will come to the Faculty of Medicine to do a presentation on the CaRMS application process.

Source: http://www.med.uottawa.ca/Students/StudentAffairs/eng/getting_residency.html
How many programs should I apply to?

- The number of programs depends on:
  - Your academic and personal achievements
  - The field to which you are applying
  - The level of competition (some programs vary year-to-year)

- To ensure a successful match, it is recommended:
  - To apply to more programs rather than fewer programs
  - To have a parallel plan (especially when applying to competitive specialties)
  - To apply to minimum of 13 programs across both specialties

- Every effort should be made to match to one of the specialties of choice in the first iteration.
  - The increasing number of unmatched students nationally will make it harder for prior year graduates to ever match to residency.

Source: http://www.med.uottawa.ca/Students/StudentAffairs/eng/getting_residency.html
CaRMS Data: # of programs and disciplines applied to by candidates

Table 56: CMG Application Statistics - 10 Year Comparison of Programs and Disciplines Chosen by Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average # of Programs by Applicant</th>
<th>Average # of Discipline by Applicant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 57: IMG Application Statistics - 10 Year Comparison of # of Programs and Disciplines Chosen by Applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average # of Programs by Applicant</th>
<th>Average # of Discipline by Applicant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Parallel plan applications

Table 9: Active CMG Application Counts by Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Total number of applicants to this discipline</th>
<th>Number of applicants to this discipline only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anatomical Pathology</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anesthesiology</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiac Surgery</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dermatology</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Radiology</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Medicine</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Medicine</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Pathology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Surgery</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hematological Pathology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory Medicine</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Biochemistry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Genetics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Microbiology</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurology</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurology - Pediatric</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuropathology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurosurgery</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Medicine</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics &amp; Gynecology</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthalmology</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic Surgery</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otolaryngology - Head &amp; Neck Surgery</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Medicine &amp; Rehabilitation</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic Surgery</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health &amp; Preventive Medicine</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiation Oncology</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urology</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vascular Surgery</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>5199</strong></td>
<td><strong>1273</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residency Application Documents

There are various supplemental documents required with your CaRMS application:

- 1. Curriculum Vitae
- 2. Personal Letter
- 3. Reference letters
- 4. Photograph
- 5. Canadian citizenship documents
- 6. Examinations and assessments (some are directly from the source, others are provided by you – see www.carms.ca for a list)

You are required to submit:

Automatically forwarded by UGME to CaRMS

- 7. Medical School Transcript
- 8. Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR / Dean’s letter)
  - Academic performance: Transcript information, electives, comments from your Rotation Director and nominations for outstanding clinical performance award
  - Accomplishments: Contributions to the faculty / community activities
1. Curriculum Vitae
The Art of Writing a CV

- The CV is an important aspect of your residency application
  - It is **required** for applications to specific programs
  - Allows the committee to see the candidates at a glance
  - It is a living document that represents you!

- Provides the committee with a concise description of:
  1. Your background
  2. Professional experiences
  3. Academic accomplishments

- Remember: You had a great CV to get into medical school but it needs to be updated (and even re-vamped) for residency

- You should provide a copy of your CV to referees upon requesting a reference letter

- Activities/experiences that are not listed on your MSPR can appear on your CV (such as **research experience** and paid work positions)
The Great Debate: Long vs. Short CV

You should have two versions of your CV:

- **Only submit the “Short CV” to CaRMS**

### Long CV ("Master CV")
- No limit - It could be 20 pages long
- Includes ALL of your undergraduate and medical school experiences in one document:
  - Includes detailed descriptions of each activity
  - Can be edited for specific positions
- **Useful for:**
  - The electronic portion of the CaRMS application: It is a CV-type document that asks you to input detailed descriptions of each experience (similar to the Autobiographical Sketch you completed when applying to medicine).

### Short CV (paper-based copy)
- Must be short, concise and to the point (similar to a job application)
- 2-3 pages maximum
- Concise summary of your Master CV
  - Put yourself in the shoes of your reader
- If you are applying to more than one specialty, having two customized versions of your CV will be important (ex: One tailored for Pediatrics and the other for Family Medicine)
- **Useful for:**
  - Requesting reference letters
  - Required for application to specific residency programs
How do I style my CaRMS CV?

- Must be concise, precise, organized and professional
- Spell check is a MUST!
- Between **2-3 pages maximum**
  - Program Directors may stop reading if it is too long
- The most important information should always be found at the **top** and **bottom** of each page or section:
  - Readers often quickly skim the middle of a document
  - To emphasize an experience, include a description to attract the reader’s attention (be concise: use sparingly)
  - **Tip!**: A section that takes up more space, has more visual impact and tends to suggest more importance to the reader
- Use reverse chronological order (most recent first)
  - Only exception: when enumerating your 4th year electives start with September 2016
How do I format my CV?

- Be consistent (with formatting and style!)
  - Ex: Have your dates either on the left or right-hand side but be consistent

- When listing dates, only indicate the year. **DO NOT** include months or seasons
  - Ex: May – August 2016 or Summer 2016

- Use one type of font only: Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Verdana, etc.
  - Fancy fonts and colors are not appreciated (keep it professional)

- Font size should be between 10.5 and 12 point

- Use font styles sparingly (**bold**, *italics*, underline)
  - Bold is good for headings and to emphasize key information

- You can adjust your margins a little but keep them between 0.75 " to 1" all over.
What sections should I include in my CaRMS CV?

1. Academic Highlights & Achievements
2. Electives & Health Related Experience
3. Research, Publications & Presentations
4. Teaching Experience
5. Community Involvement & Contributions to the Faculty
6. Professional Development
7. Work Experience
8. Education
9. Memberships & Affiliations
10. Languages
11. Interests
Let’s look at an example!
Before we start: **Header and Footer**

- Use your name as the header, not “Curriculum Vitae”
- Include your contact information (your address is optional)

---

Roger Smyth  
1234 Smyth rd. Ottawa, ON K1H 8M5  
613.555.7777  
r Smyth2016@uottawa.ca

---

- Be sure to repeat your name and uOttawa e-mail address on every additional page of your CV (after your first page)

- Do not forget to include page numbers at the bottom of each page. Be sure to include the total page count (ex: 1/3, 2/3, 3/3)
1. Academic Highlights & Achievements

- If you have received a nomination for an outstanding clinical performance, indicate it/them first
  - This includes a nomination from either a preceptor OR the rotation director (they both count!)
  - List each nomination on a separate line (do not group them)

- You can include information dating back to your undergraduate degree
  - Do not go as far back as high school, unless you have done something *extraordinary* or won an *exceptional* award (ex: Governor General Academic Medal)

- Bold the titles that are relevant to the specialty you are applying for

- Be sure to list the information in reverse chronological order

**ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Award for outstanding clinical performance in Anesthesia
- Nomination for outstanding clinical performance in *Otolaryngology*
- Nomination for outstanding clinical performance in Internal Medicine
- Nomination for outstanding clinical performance in Emergency Medicine (x2)
- **Award in Education Communicator Competency**, Francophone stream, Undergraduate Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON
  - Awarded for displaying excellent communication skills during academic, clinical or extra-curricular activities
- First Prize Award for Innovation in Research at Undergraduate Medical Education Research Day, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON
- Canadian National Champion for Varsity Soccer, Queen’s University, ON
- NSERC – Undergraduate Student Research Award, Queen’s University, ON
- Dean’s Honour List with Distinction, Queen’s University, ON
- Gold Medal Recipient, Public Speaking Competition, Kingston, ON
2. Electives & Health Related Experience

- List all of your electives for 4th year first
  - Start with September 2016 and finish with electives planned in 2017 (if they are relevant to the specialty you are applying to)

- Include all of your pre-clerkship electives, even if they are not in your specialty of choice
  - It is normal to have completed electives in a variety of specialties in the first two years of study

- Include a short description to highlight an experience of significant relevance, such as an international elective

### ELECTIVES & HEALTH RELATED EXPERIENCE

#### CLERKSHIP (YEAR 4 ELECTIVES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver, BC</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Respirology</td>
<td>Foothills Medical Centre, Calgary, AB</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>Henderson Hospital, Hamilton, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>IWK Health Center, Halifax, NS</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>General Internal Medicine</td>
<td>Kingston General Hospital, Kingston, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>The Ottawa Hospital, General campus, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Anesthesia</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Health Center, Toronto, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Otolaryngology</td>
<td>The Ottawa Hospital, General campus, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Respirology</td>
<td>The Ottawa Hospital, General campus, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>2 wks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PRE-CLERKSHIP (YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2 ELECTIVES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>General Surgery</td>
<td>The Ottawa Hospital, General campus, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
<td>The Ottawa Hospital, Civic campus, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Family Medicine</td>
<td>Private practice, Ottawa, ON</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, ON</td>
<td>40 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>International Health</td>
<td>Helping Hands Hospital, Kathmandu, Nepal</td>
<td>120 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  - Provided emergency health services to members of the Chabahil community in a non-profit hospital
3. Research, Publications & Presentations

- **Publications**
  - Include the citation of the published article and be sure to **Underline or Bold** your name in the list of authors.
  - You can also include papers that have been submitted for consideration in this section, but be sure to clearly indicate that this is the case (ex: "In press" or "submitted for publication")

- **Presentations**
  - Include any presentation you were invited to do outside of the regular MD curriculum.
  - If your data was presented at a conference but you did not do the presentation, indicate: "Research findings presented at…"

- **Research Experience**
  - List all of the research activities you have been involved in (including undergraduate).
  - Paid research experience can go in this section as well as in the Work Experience section but will be presented in a different format.

**RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS**

**PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS**

- **Smyth, R., Pugh, A., Rogers, J.F., Rainville, I., Calcaraous, R.**, (2015). *This is where you enter your long research title and include all relevant information… [In press]*
  - Study aims to determine… (Provide a description of the project)
  - Performed a literature review, obtained ethics approval, assisted with clinic visits, chart reviews, analyzed the data … (Provide a description of your role)

**PRESENTATIONS**

- **Smyth, R., Pugh, A., Rogers, J.F., Rainville, I., Calcaraous, R.**, *Insert the title of your presentation…*
  - Accepted for oral presentation at the 119th American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Dallas, TX, Sept. 27, 2015.

- **Rainville, I., Smyth, R., Calcaraous, R.**, *Insert the title of your presentation…*

- **Smyth, R.**, *Insert the title of your presentation…*
  - Poster presentation at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Medicine Research Day, Ottawa, ON, 2013

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

- **2013**
  - *Title of your research project…*
    - Supervisor: Dr. Carl Diologee, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON
    - First Prize Award for Innovation in Research at Undergraduate Medical Education Research Day
    - Undergraduate Medical Education Research project aimed to determine… (Provide a description of the project)
    - Involved with the project from start to finish, performed a literature review, obtained ethics approval, assisted with clinic visits, chart reviews, analyzed the data … (Provide a description of your role)
4. Teaching Experience

This section is optional but it allows you to list any teaching experience you may have acquired.

Teaching experience can be either formal (Teaching Assistant) or informal (Facilitator: Clerkship Bedside Teaching).

Please note that presentations in classrooms such as "i-Screen" and "Brain Day", should not be included in this section, but rather under Contributions to the Faculty.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2015 – 2016 Facilitator: Clerkship Bedside Teaching, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON
  • Provide a description of your role/responsibilities...

2015 Case-Based Learning Tutor: Introduction to the Curriculum, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON
  • Provide a description of your role/responsibilities...

2014 Instructor: MCAT Preparation Course, Prep 101, Kingston, ON

2012 – 2013 Teaching Assistant: Department of Health Sciences, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON

2010 – 2011 Private Tutor: Undergraduate Health Sciences, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON
5. Community Involvement & Contributions to the Faculty

This section includes all of the volunteer and extracurricular activities you have been involved in, regrouped into 3 categories:

- **Leadership Positions**
  - Any leadership role you have taken while in medicine or during your undergraduate degree

- **Contributions to the Faculty**
  - Activities you have been involved in solely in medicine

- **Community Involvement**
  - Any volunteer activity outside of medicine (this can also include experiences from your undergraduate degree – not high school)

Be sure to include a short description for every leadership role you list.
6. Professional Development

Include any professional development activities you have been involved in or have received training in, such as:

- Training offered by Interest Groups
- Certifications: CPR instructor
- Professional development: CMA Professionalism Series Seminar, CMA/CFMS Student Leadership workshop, Leadership seminars for medical students, etc.
- French Classes
- Ontario Medical Student Workshops, etc.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2016  Presenter: 119th American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery, Dallas, TX
2015  ACLS – Advanced Cardiac Life Support, University of Ottawa, ON
2015  Participant: Ontario Medical Students Association, Wellness Conference, Jackson’s Point, ON
2014  Presenter: 3rd Canadian Conference on Physician Health, Calgary, AB
2014  Presenter: University of Ottawa Faculty of Medicine Research Day, Ottawa, ON
2014  ASIST – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Ottawa, ON
2014  Participant: Family Medicine Clinical Skills Conference, University of Ottawa, ON
2013  Participant: OMSW – Ontario Medical Student Weekend, University of Ottawa, ON
7. Work Experience

- Include only the positions that are pertinent or relevant to medicine
  - Ex: Associate trainer, camp counselor, etc. can be relevant to explain prior experience working with children

- Paid research experience can go under "Research Experience" as well as "Work Experience" but you will use a more concise format in this section

WORK EXPERIENCE

2014 – 2015
Student Mentor and Tutor: Student Affairs Office, Faculty of Medicine, Ottawa, ON
  • Provide a description of your role/responsibilities...

2014
Research Assistant: Department of Internal Medicine, University of Ottawa, ON

2006 – 2010
Associate Trainer: Sports Camp, Soccer Program, Kingston, ON
8. Education

- Include all of the formal education you have received after high school.

- It is not necessary for this section to appear on the first page of your CV, since most medical students have a similar educational background.
  - If you were admitted in medicine after your 3rd year of undergraduate degree, use the example below and add (completed 3rd year).

- If you have completed a Master’s Degree or PhD, the Education section can be placed after "Academic Highlights and Achievements".

**EDUCATION**

- **2013 – 2017**: Doctorate in Medicine, Francophone stream, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON
- **2009 – 2013**: Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology (Honours), Queen’s University, Kingston, ON
9. Memberships & Affiliations

Include all memberships and affiliations that are related to medicine in this section

- Do not forget to include OMA and CMA. Even though most students are members of these associations, if you do not include them in your list, your CV will appear as though it is missing information.

If you are not yet a member of the association affiliated to the specialty you are applying to, you may want to join and include them on your CV

- As an additional benefit, you will receive newsletters and correspondence about the specialty, which could be helpful during the interview process.

Tip! Some groups provide free memberships (such as The College of Family Physicians Canada - CFPC)

MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS

2016 – Present  
CSO – Canadian Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

2015 – Present  
CSIM – Canadian Society of Internal Medicine

2013 – Present  
OMA – Ontario Medical Association

2013 – Present  
CMA – Canadian Medical Association

2013 – Present  
Médecins francophones du Canada
10. Languages

- This is not a mandatory section to have on your CaRMS CV

- Start with all of the languages in which you are fluent, then list any additional languages in which you have either beginner, intermediate or advanced knowledge

- Dates are not necessary for this section

**LANGUAGES**

Fluent in French and English, beginner Spanish
11. Interests

This section is useful for many reasons:

1. If you are requesting reference letters, this small section can help “round out” the referee’s perception of you as a person
2. In the interview, the panel can ask you questions about your interests, which may help them remember your candidacy (or help them relate to you)

If you do not have enough room left on the page to include 3 lines of interests (shown in the example), you may opt to present the information this way:

- Ex: Travelling, volleyball, cycling, violin, piano, improvisation theatre

INTERESTS

Sports: Canadian National Champion soccer player, trainer for several soccer sports camps, avid runner (National Capital Race Weekend, Spartan Race and Terry Fox run).
Cooking: Accomplished amateur chef, recently planned and cooked a 10-course meal for 20 people.
Arts & Music: Pianist (Royal Conservatory of Music - Grade 10), violinist, improvisation theatre actor.
FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions!

- **Do I repeat information on my CV?**
  - Absolutely! The information must be repeated on your CaRMS application, MSPR letter and personal CV

- **Do I include my undergraduate experience?**
  - Of course! You had a life before medical school. You should not include high school unless you have done something extraordinary or won an exceptional award.

- **Does my CV have to follow the Roger Smyth template?**
  - No. Your CV is a document that represents YOU therefore we encourage you to make it your own (with regards to the look). For the format and order in which to present the information, we strongly encourage you to follow this template for your CaRMS application.

- **When should I start preparing my CaRMS CV?**
  - The earlier the better, since your referees will most likely ask you for a copy when agreeing to write you a reference letter. Please note that most students start to tailor their CV in August and modify it until their CaRMS submission in November.

- **Should I create multiple versions of my short CV?**
  - If you are applying to more than one specialty, having two customized versions of your CV is important (ex: One tailored for Pediatrics and the other for Family Medicine).
2. Personal Letters
Activity

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

A. What are you passionate about in life and how does this relate to your work?
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

B. Why did you choose this specialty?
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

C. Identify 3 skills you possess that demonstrate that you are well-suited for this specialty.
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

D. Describe 3 experiences that have prepared you for this specialty.
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

E. What are your long-term personal and career goals?
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

F. What qualities do you look for in a residency program?
   • 1.
   • 2.
   • 3.

Adapted from: Anita D. Taylor, M.A. Ed., Associate Professor & Director of Career Advising Oregon Health & Science SOM
http://webcampus.drexelmed.edu/cdc/files/Worksheet_For_Personal_Statement.pdf
What is a Personal Letter?

Most programs indicate that the personal letter is an important factor in their selection of candidates.

- A **good letter** may get you an interview and can help reinforce the impression you make during the interview.
- On the other hand, a **bad letter** could ruin your chances.

For maximum impact: write clearly, have a logical flow and be concise.
Writing a Personal Letter

- Programs are very particular about their personal letters. Look on the CaRMS website for the specific requirements for each program to ensure that:
  1. You answer all the questions
  2. You respect the word count limit

- Personal letters usually describe: your past, your motivation to pursue the given field of medicine, your experience and skills that have prepared you for the specialty, why you are suitable for this specific residency program…
  - You should also describe your career objectives and how these goals relate to the program of interest.
  - Most importantly, emphasize your unique qualities that allow you to stand out!

- If you are applying to more than one discipline (i.e. family medicine and ob/gyn), spend time to tailor your letter to each discipline and program.
Structure

Paragraph 1 - Introduction:
The “Hook“
1) Captivate the reader's attention with a personal story or vignette
2) Demonstrate your passion for the field

Paragraph 2:
Why medicine & Why the specialty?
• Provide examples to illustrate the following:
  1) Your motivation: Emphasize personal and clinical reasons
  2) Your interest for the specialty: patient diversity, scope of practice, etc.

Paragraph 3:
Why YOU for this specialty?
• Discuss your character traits, your experiences, your contributions and your personal strengths.
• Look at the qualities identified in each program description and find relevant examples

Paragraph 4:
Career Goals
• Give a general overview of your future goals (research, teaching, mentorship)
• Avoid being too specific about practice and subspecialty

Paragraph 5:
Why the program?
1) Why the program: Discuss your elective experience, what you enjoy about the program
2) Why the city: Mention your support system (family, friends)

Paragraph 6:
Conclusion
• 1) Summarize your strengths
• 2) Restate your enthusiasm for pursuing this residency program
Paragraph 1: Introduction – Passionate “hook”

There are many ways to start a personal letter, the most popular tend to be: a quote, a saying or a story/vignette.

Your introduction serves two purposes:

1) Captivate the attention of your reader
   - The selection committee has many applications to review and many personal letters to read. Captivate their attention by starting your letter with a story or a vignette that is unique to you!

2) Demonstrate your passion for the field
   - Let the story demonstrate your passion for the field and create a segue to your background

Avoid: Giving a chronological explanation detailing how you came to your decision to choose that specialty
Paragraph 2: Why medicine & Why the specialty?

The second paragraph should be a segue from your introduction to illustrate why you chose medicine as a career and more specifically, why you chose this specialty. Be honest.

Important characteristics to emphasize in this paragraph are:

1) Your motivation: Personal reasons (illness of a family member, wanting to help people, etc.) and Clinical reasons (prevention, patient advocacy, etc.)

2) Your interest for the specialty: Patient diversity, flexibility with the scope of practice, patient-physician relationship, etc.

Select key points you wish to illustrate and provide examples to from your past experience to develop each point. Be specific and identify what makes it unique for YOU.

Avoid: Unconvincing general statements such as: “I like to treat patients“. Provide specific, analytic points to explain your suitability for the program.
Paragraph 3: Why you for this specialty?

The third paragraph allows you to provide specific examples to illustrate why you are the right person for the specialty.

Think about your character traits, your experiences, your contributions and your personal strengths.

Identify elements from your CV that you wish to highlight, in order to demonstrate that you are a well-rounded applicant. Refer to those other parts of your application using examples:

- Character traits / Personal strengths: “Preceptors have commented on…”
- Experiences: “An incident from my Family Medicine rotation is an example of…”
- Contributions: “As my medical student performance record shows…”

Look at the qualities identified in each program description and find relevant examples to tailor your application to the individual programs.

- Tip!: Look at your evaluations to help you identify attributes and strengths and/or refer to the CanMEDS roles for inspiration.

Avoid: Enumerating the facts listed on your CV and in your MSPR. Rather, use the experiences you gained while doing these activities to expand on the facts they already know and to provide concrete examples to support your claims.
Paragraph 4: Career Goals

"Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?"

- The 4th paragraph allows you to tell your readers about your career goals, where you see yourself in the future (short and long-term) and what your practice will look like.

- Give a general overview of your future goals (be open and flexible). Will you contribute to the field of medicine through?:
  - Research
  - Teaching and/or
  - Mentorship
    - Provide examples of your prior experiences

- Describe your vision of your future practice and what you hope to accomplish:
  - Setting: hospital-based, community-based, or both
  - Location: remote, inner-city, international, etc.
  - Population: underserviced populations, children, palliative care, etc.
  - Subspecialties, etc.

- **Avoid:** Being too narrow in your description of your future goals (subspecialty, location, etc.). Programs are looking for candidates who are open-minded, and who understand the nature of the ever changing field of medicine.
Paragraph 5: Why the program/institution

- This paragraph is **program specific** and should be tailored to each application. It allows you to show the program that you are familiar with them and that you hope to match there.

- This paragraph should address 2 different areas:
  1. **Why the program**
     - If you have completed an elective there, start by discussing your experience (what you noticed about the residents, team, collegiality, communication, attention to detail, etc.).
     - Do your research and find out specific points about the program and why you are interested to train there. Vary the technical reasons with the personal characteristics of the work environment (i.e., collaborative team).
  2. **Why the city**
     - Explain what you enjoy about the city (culture, art, museums, sports, etc.) and discuss your family, friends and strong support system who are present (if it is the case).
     - If you have never visited that city, identify reasons why you would be happy to pursue residency training in that location (link to your hobbies, activities).

- **Avoid:** 1) Giving general statements about the program that can be applied to other programs; 2) Placing too much emphasis on the location and not enough on the program itself.
Conclusion

The conclusion allows you to refer back to the introduction, and to create a link to your vignette or your story.

It also allows you to:

1. **Summarize your strengths:** Reiterate the evidence you have laid out throughout the letter to explain why you are the right person for the program.

2. **Restate your enthusiasm:** Leave your reader with a clear indication of your passion for the program and specialty.
   - Polite statements of gratitude, hope and enthusiasm are encouraged.

**Avoid:** Diluting the impact of your letter by ending it on a bland note or using general statements and clichés.
# Common Mistakes

## Writing
- Overuse of ‘I’ statements
- Using abbreviations
- Using contractions (ex: ‘don’t’ instead of ‘do not’)
- Using pretentious words or jargon (ex: ‘amazing team’)
- Using too many quotations or clichés
- Poor grammar and spelling errors (ask friends and family to proof read your letter)
- Using negative statements (ex: stating what you do not like about other specialties)
- Avoid being too creative with your writing style (your letter should demonstrate your ability to communicate with your patients and colleagues)

## Structure
- Lack of flow or purpose to a paragraph
- Not being concise (paragraphs that are too long)
- Using repetitive words and/or sentence structure

## Content
- Repeating the facts on your CV
- Exaggerating, making excuses or seeming arrogant
- Not providing examples to back up the points you are making (ex: descriptions of your character traits)
- Too much focus on specific career plans or future fellowships (too narrow of a description)
- Giving a long chronological explanation detailing how you came to your decision to choose that specialty

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**Tip!** Have your letter proof read by at least 1 expert! Ask a mentor, someone within the specialty or your counsellor at SAO.
FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions!

What is the length of the letter?
- Each program has different word limit requirements, it often varies from 400 words to 1000 words. Take a look on the CaRMS website to tailor your letter to each program requirement.

How many versions of my Personal Letter should I create?
- You should have one “long version“ of your letter for each specialty you are applying to (i.e. family medicine and ob/gyn: have one “long version“ for each). Then tailor each letter based on the program requirements.
- Remember to modify “ Paragraph 5: Why the program/institution“ for each application.
- Look on the CaRMS website for specific letter requirements for each program.

When should I start preparing my Personal Letters?
- Start early, give yourself adequate time to reflect on who you are, what you have done (and what you have gotten out of it), where you are going (and how you are going to get there). A well-written personal letter will take time to prepare. Most students start to collect information to write their personal letters in September and modify them until their CaRMS submission in November, to include examples from their electives experience.

References
- Drexel University: http://webcampus.drexelmed.edu/cdc/medpsSample.asp
- Vanderbilt University https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/cim/personal-statement
3. Reference Letters
Reference Letters

- The reference letter (or evaluation form) requirements vary from one program to another. Look at the CaRMS website to determine the specific conditions such as: number of letters required (in and outside of the specialty), who is qualified to write the letters, etc.

**WHO to ask**

- Reference letters must be provided by **physician supervisors** and **preceptors** (not residents or fellows) who have worked with you in a clinical setting.
- Choose referees who will write special letters that highlight your true skills to the selection committee. They should be from supervisors who have positive opinions about you and your abilities. It is important that they know you well, and if possible, that they are also well-known in that field.
- Some letters should be in your chosen specialties, but not all letters need to be. Although most programs require approximately three letters, it is much better to have many to choose from, and then select which you would like to send to each program.

**HOW to ask**

- You can ask your supervisor if he/she feels that he/she could write a **strong reference** for you for your application to residency.

**WHEN to ask**

- It is best to ask for reference letters **near the end** of your rotation/elective/selective. This ensures that your skills and abilities are fresh in the referee's memory and also permits a good amount of time to write the letter.
- Normally, your reference letters are due on the last day of your first 10 weeks of electives. If you are hoping to get a reference letter from a specific fourth year elective, you should book it earlier on. This will give your referee adequate time to write a strong letter before the deadline.

Source: http://www.med.uottawa.ca/Students/StudentAffairs/eng/getting_residency.html
# Reference Letters

After your referees have agreed to write you a letter, you should provide them with the following documents:

1. **Thank you letter**
   - A letter thanking them for agreeing to write you a reference letter.
   - Include specific points you would like emphasized in the letter (academic record, clinical abilities, personal characteristics, etc.)

2. **Curriculum Vitae**
   - The short-version of your CV (2-3 pages)

3. **Past evaluations**
   - That your referee has completed (*Not from other preceptors*)

4. **Guidelines & Deadlines**
   - Provide them with a list of guidelines: areas the letter should address
   - How to submit their letter to CaRMS (cover letter)
   - The deadline to submit the letter. It is best to request the submission deadline a few weeks before the actual CaRMS deadline

5. **Photograph**
   - Some students include a picture of themselves to remind preceptors who they are. You can also do this electronically by adding a picture of yourself in your e-mail signature.

6. **Envelope**
   - Pick up a few prepaid Xpresspost envelopes, for the referees who prefer to send their letter by mail. This way, you can track the delivery and receive a confirmation once it arrives at CaRMS.
Residency Application Documents Timeline

**July / August**
- Start to tailor your CV
- Prepare documentation for requesting reference letters
- Start contacting referees about writing you a reference letter

**September**
- Start your Personal letters

**October**
- End of October – Aim to have your Personal letters completed
- Have your letters proof read

**November**
- November 22, 2016 at noon
  Submit CaRMS application!

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See the CaRMS [Applicant Timeline](#) for specific milestones and dates

**Tip!: Do not wait until the deadline to submit your CaRMS application. Due to the large volume of applications, the system may be slow or it could even shut down.**
Can someone look at my Residency Application documents?

The following resources might be helpful for feedback on your documents and interview skills:

- Specialists within your field of interest
- Mentors (Residents, Doctors, Research Supervisors…)
- Classmates. Friends and Family
- The Counsellors at the Student Affairs Office

To book an appointment with a counsellor you can:

- Contact MEDSAO@uOttawa.ca
- Use the online booking system (green = busy / white = available): http://app.med.uottawa.ca/ReservationsSAO/Reservations.aspx
- For a list of additional resources, please visit our website at: http://www.med.uottawa.ca/Students/StudentAffairs/eng/getting_residency.html