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## **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Osteopathic Medical Students in the 2021-2022 NRMP Application Process**

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**Category:** Public Health

**Research Topic:** Health Disparities-Social Determinants of Health

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Osteopathic Medical Students in the 2021-2022 NRMP Application Process

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**Statement of Significance:** The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the undergraduate medical education (UME) NRMP application process (NAP). This included virtual interviews, the suspension or elimination of away rotations, elimination of COMLEX 2 PE/USMLE STEP 2 CS licensing exams, and increased online rotations. Previous literature has reported on the impact the pandemic had on the 2020-2021 NAP; however, limited data exists on the impact of the pandemic on this past cycle, from 2021-2022 (1 – 4).

**Research Methods:** An IRB-approved 20 question survey was developed and distributed after the 2022 match via email and social media. 86 students from the Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Kansas City University College of Osteopathic Medicine participated in the study. Likert-scale questions with a range of 1-5 and a comment box were used to assess student experiences related to changes the pandemic had on their match process. Several areas were assessed, e.g., away rotations, virtual interviews, board requirement changes including the suspension of COMLEX Level 2 PE, advising, psychological well-being, etc. Statistical analysis was performed using Qualtrics software.

**Data Analysis:** 97.59% matched in the 2021-2022 NAP. 94.81% matched in their first-choice specialty. The number of away rotations in matched specialties ranged from 1 to 9 (M=2.36, SD=0.91). Only 39.74% matched at an away rotation site. On a scale of 1 to 10, overall impact felt by the pandemic on the 2021-2022 NAP was M=4.92, SD=1.92. 50.77% of students reported the suspension of the third board exam impacted their application process very highly. Approximately one-third of students rated both stress and anxiety as high impacts. 72.06% of participants sought feedback from students from the 2020-2021 NAP and 48.98% of participants found this feedback to be highly helpful.

**Results:** 97.59% matched in the 2021-2022 NAP. 94.81% matched in their first-choice specialty. The number of away rotations in matched specialties ranged from 1 to 9 (M=2.36, SD=0.91). Only 39.74% matched at an away rotation site. On a scale of 1 to 10, overall impact felt by the pandemic on the 2021-2022 NAP was M=4.92, SD=1.92. 50.77% of students reported the suspension of the third board exam impacted their application process very highly. Approximately one-third of students rated both stress and anxiety as high impacts. 72.06% of participants sought feedback from students from the 2020-2021 NAP and 48.98% of participants found this feedback to be highly helpful.

**Conclusion:** Changes in the 2021-2022 NAP due to COVID-19 positively and negatively impacted students. Student comments indicated that virtual interviews opened up more opportunities to interview and save money. Students also commented that due to the strain of the pandemic, they had less time with their attending physicians and that this could have negatively impacted their letters of recommendation. Overall, cancellation of the PE and CS was viewed positively. And many students sought out feedback from applicants of the 2020-2021 NAP to be better prepared to face the challenges of the continued pandemic.

## References

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**Financial Disclosures:** None reported

**Support:** None reported

**Ethical Approval:** Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine's (LUCOM) IRB process is the following: complete the necessary CITI training, obtain a permission request letter from the Dean of LUCOM to perform the research, create a recruitment letter that is to be sent to participants via email and/or social media, create an informed consent, create survey, and upload all of these required documents to the Cayuse IRB application portal. This project was reviewed and approved by Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine's IRB. IRB number: IRB-FY21-22-908

**Informed Consent:** The first page of the survey includes a brief overview of the project and a link to a PDF of the informed consent for participants to review. The potential participant then has the option to select either 'I consent' or 'I do not consent.' If 'I consent,' is not selected, the potential participant cannot move to the second question of the survey and the survey closes.

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