

Cracking the Code: How a Mock Match Program Transforms Pharmacy Students' Understand of the Process

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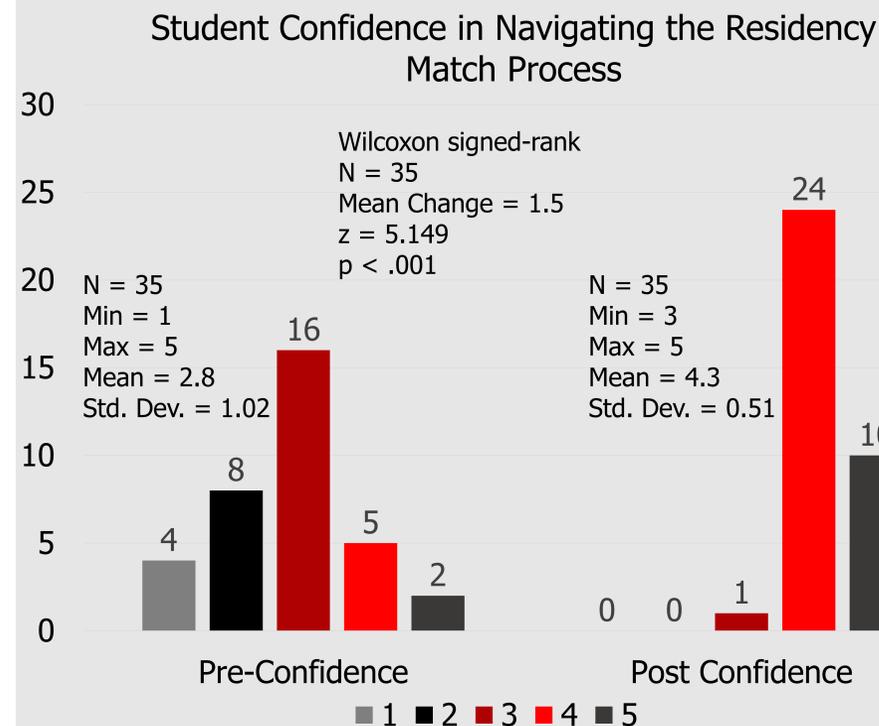
Background/Objective

- The pharmacy residency matching process continue to be a very competitive process with nearly 20% of applicants not matching between both PGY1 and PGY2 residency programs in 2025.¹
- Among students planning to pursue post-graduate residency training or were undecided, the extremely competitive nature of residency programs was the most significant barrier reported.²
- This competitive process, can cause large amounts of stress and anxiety for students already facing a difficult curriculum and workload in a PharmD program.³
- To educate students and decrease stress related to pursuit of residency training, faculty at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy developed an active learning Mock Match Program to assess the impact of a mock residency match program on third year pharmacy students' confidence, perceptions and understanding of the match process.

Methods

- Third year pharmacy students (n=35) enrolled in the Fall 2024 Introduction to Postgraduate Residency Training elective course participated in the exercise.
- Utilized a pre-post survey design:
 - Pre-survey contained Likert scale and open-ended questions assessing students' confidence in understanding the residency match process and reasons for lack of confidence.
 - Post-survey featured similar questions to evaluate the impact of the mock match activities on students' confidence in understanding the residency match process.
- Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to determine the effect of the mock match tool on students' confidence navigating the match process.
- Thematic analysis was conducted on the open-ended questions through a two-cycle inductive coding process. The identified themes were verified through analyst triangulation, enhancing the rigor of the thematic analysis.

Results



Qualitative (n=35):

- Students were asked to explain what factors influenced their self-confidence rating for knowledge pertaining to the pharmacy residency match process prior to the mock match exercise.
- Two major themes were identified:
 - **Lack of Knowledge/Understanding** of the match process
 - **Lack of familiarity** with the application process and ranking logistics.
- When asked what concerned them the most about participating in the residency match process prior to the mock match exercise, several themes emerged:
 - **Financial burden, Competitiveness** and Strategy, Fear of **not matching** or getting a **suboptimal match**, and Logistical/Time-related concerns
- After completing the mock match exercise, rated their confidence again and were asked to explain the rating. Student reported themes included:
 - **Improved Understanding** of Match Mechanics, **Greater confidence** in personal decision making, **Emotional reassurance**, and **Increased comfort** with tools and logistics.

MATCH RESULTS

Program	Matched Applicants
CRMC	Avery Wells, Cameron Deloit
GAVAMC	Alex Kerwin, Casey Lee, Jamie Parker, Jordan Wilson
TCMC	Dylan Daniels, Riley Cash
UMC	Finley Gray, Morgan Alexander, Taylor Edwards, Sam Kind

Implications

- The mock match exercise greatly enhanced pharmacy students' confidence in navigating the match and alleviated concerns around confidence in ranking programs and likely attaining a match that meets their needs.
- Feedback from open-ended questions offered valuable insights for refining future course offerings.

References:

1. ASHP Match | Statistics of the Match. natmatch.com. Published 2025. <https://natmatch.com/ashprmp/stats.html>
2. Hammond DA, Oyler DR, Devlin JW, et al. Perceived Motivating Factors and Barriers for the Completion of Postgraduate Training Among American Pharmacy Students Prior to Beginning Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences. *The American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*. 2017;81(5):90-90. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe81590>
3. Isgett V. Understanding the Burnout Crisis Among Student Pharmacists. *Pharmacy Times*. 2024;18. <https://www.pharmacytimes.com/view/understanding-the-burnout-crisis-among-student-pharmacists>

