

## The plight of being a rural applicant for medical school

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In light of the recent article, 'Is Northern Ontario School of Medicine there yet?', highlighting the failed social mandate to produce a sufficient number of physicians who are willing to practise in rural locations upon graduation, I believe I can add some insight from my experience as a rural applicant applying to medical school.<sup>1</sup>

The realities of being a competitive applicant for medical school in an underserved area are a significant challenge. And with Canada having up to 4000 applicants for some schools that may only have 100 seats available, the competition is extreme.<sup>2</sup> Often, rural applicants are at a severe disadvantage, and out of desperation, try to find the route of least resistance. The reality is that compared to their urban counterparts, rural students stand a slim chance of gaining acceptance and therefore seek out seats that are reserved for rural applicants without genuinely having the intention of practising in a small community once they are qualified.

Through anecdotal experience, having grown up in a rural community where there were no MCAT® courses, no laboratories, a discontinuity of extracurricular activities and where the local community college did not offer the necessary prerequisite subjects, I was intimidated by my

urban counterparts who were able to engage in all of the above. As a result, when application time came, I was scared to apply to schools that did not have seats reserved for rural applicants because, based on an unholistic point-based approach application system that was blinded to my realities, I stood a slim chance of gaining acceptance. From this standpoint, I applied to schools, including Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), as a rural applicant who had honestly grown up and lived in a rural community for my entire life but never had the genuine interest in returning in the future. I believe this is the crux of the problem: students caught between their realities of where they statistically stand the best chance of acceptance and their integrity of where they genuinely hope to practise. They take the opportunity provided by schools such as NOSM and the University of British Columbia that have seats available for rural students because they consider that it is their best chance of gaining acceptance, but once they have that diploma in hand, few students return to the communities where they grew up.

In my unsolicited opinion, there are real rural students – the true diehards of the North – who have

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the potential to return; however, these are the students who do not make it to the application phase. Due to the financial and psychological burdens required to round out one's application coupled with the myriad of inaccuracies printed online, these students often feel like lone wolves in the application process and many change career paths before they even apply. When it comes time to apply to medical school, though we are all from the North, we do not all hope to return to the North, and there is where your discontinuity lies.

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## REFERENCES

1. Hutten-Czapski P. Is Northern Ontario school of medicine there yet? *Can J Rural Med* 2019;24:103.
2. Maclean's. Medical school in Canada: What does it take to get in? Comparing admission statistics from medical schools across the country; 2016. Available from: <https://www.macleans.ca/education/medical-school-in-canada-what-does-it-take-to-get-in/>

## COUNTRY CARADIOGRAMS

Have you encountered a challenging ECG lately?

In most issues of CJRM an ECG is presented and questions are asked.

On another page, the case is discussed and the answer is provided.

Please submit cases, including a copy of the ECG, to Suzanne Kingsmill, Managing Editor, CJRM, 45 Overlea Blvd., P.O. Box 22015, Toronto ON M4H 1N9; [manedcjrm@gmail.com](mailto:manedcjrm@gmail.com)

## CARDIOGRAMMES RURAUX

Avez-vous eu à décrypter un ECG particulièrement difficile récemment?

Dans la plupart des numéros du JCMR, nous présentons un ECG assorti de questions.

Les réponses et une discussion du cas sont affichées sur une autre page.

Veuillez présenter les cas, accompagnés d'une copy de l'ECG, à Suzanne Kingsmill, rédactrice administrative, JCMR, 45, boul. Overlea, C. P. 22015, Toronto (Ontario) M4H 1N9;

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