

A dental general practice residency is an excellent opportunity to gain experience beyond the scope of undergraduate dental education. For example, most residencies offer training in anesthesiology, medicine, and emergency and operating room dentistry. In general, GPR-trained dentists are more likely to admit patients to a hospital and less likely to refer patients to specialists. They also usually offer a wider range of services than the non-GPR-trained dentist. Residencies may not be for everyone, but most dentists agree that a GPR can significantly enhance a dentist's understanding of total patient management.

— From the *ASDA Guide to Postdoctoral Programs, Volume 1: General Practice Residencies and Advanced Education in General Dentistry*

GPR Programs: A Strategy for Admission

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Many dental students continue their training at hospital-based general practice residency (GPR) programs. These residency programs offer new graduates additional clinical experience and didactic instruction while emphasizing the association of medicine and dentistry.

Like most things in life, what you get out of a GPR program is directly related to what you put into it. Spending a year in this way should, at minimum, increase your speed and confidence and reinforce what you learned in dental school. And, a GPR program can serve as a paid transition period before entering private practice or further graduate schooling.

Chances of admission to a GPR increase with an organized and coherent application strategy. Candidates who are aware of the qualities being sought by program directors, and who package themselves and their credentials accordingly, are always at an advantage. Following is a comprehensive checklist to follow when seeking admission to a GPR.

It provides tips ranging from program selection to application and interviewing techniques.

✓ **Obtain a copy of the *ASDA Guides to Postdoctoral Programs in General Practice Residencies*.** (To order, call ASDA at 800-621-8099, extension 2795. Or, check your dental school library for a copy.) This guide contains a one-page summary of each program in order to help applicants make informed decisions when selecting the programs to which they will apply. The guide also specifies whether or not each program participates in the Postdoctoral Application Support Service (PASS) and the Postdoctoral Dental Matching Program (Match).

✓ **Apply to a realistic number of programs.** It would seem that the more programs to which you apply, the better your chances that one will accept you. However, GPR program directors receive hundreds of applications, and yours probably will not be given much (if any) attention without follow-up correspondence on your part. Limit your applications to as

many as you will have time to actively pursue (perhaps eight or ten programs).

✓ **Consider your chances of being accepted.** Some programs have six residency positions or more. These programs must accept a greater number of applicants to fill these spaces than programs with only one or two residents.

✓ **Submit your applications early.** Many program directors look at applications as they come in; thus, the decision-making process may begin well before the application deadline. Moreover, a last-minute application sends the message that you are a procrastinator. Show the program director that you are interested and organized.

✓ **Limit your essay to one page.** Control the message you send by putting your important points on one attractive page. State your case concisely. Programs receive so many applications that the longer yours is, the less likely it is that it will be read carefully.

✓ **Do not express an interest in specializing.** GPR programs are designed as training for general dentists. Program directors may not wish their programs to be used as stepping stones to other programs, i.e., your true interest, fearing that an applicant interested in a

specialty may not be interested or enthusiastic about the requirements of the GPR program. Paradoxically, many specialty programs look favorably upon (or even require) GPR experience.

✓ **Do not emphasize an interest in clinical dentistry.** Hospital-based programs emphasize the interaction between medicine and dentistry and the dental treatment of medically compromised patients. There is much less emphasis on actual dental disciplines such as crown and bridge. Therefore . . .

✓ **Express an interest in treating medically compromised patients.**

✓ **Describe how your presence will benefit the program.** "Toot your own horn" by emphasizing your strengths in your essay. Remember, your main concern is the benefit you will derive from the program; however, program directors are concerned with how you will be of benefit to their programs.

✓ **Explain that you get along well with others.** Programs that have more than one resident will be seeking applicants who are able to function as part of a team. Be a team player.

✓ **Turn your weaknesses into strengths.** Most applicants have some obvious weaknesses.

Instead of letting your application work against you, use it to put yourself and your credentials in the best light. For example, if you repeatedly failed classes, you are "persistent and never give up." If you were held back a year, your "maturity gives you a greater appreciation for opportunities." Show them what you have to offer.

✓ **Follow up.** Phone program directors to verify that they received your application materials or to inquire about the program. Write a follow-up letter to reiterate your interest and strengthen your application. The more contact you can create, the greater the chances that you will stand out in the huge applicant pile.

✓ **If possible, visit the program site.** Spending time at a program demonstrates your interest in it. Observe and ask questions, but most importantly, give them a face with which to associate your application. The busy schedule of a dental student makes it difficult, but any visit you can make will benefit your application.

✓ **Have fun at your interview.** If you were fortunate enough to be selected for an interview, it has already been decided that you are qualified for the position. They now want to see if you are someone who would be a pleasure to have around for a year.

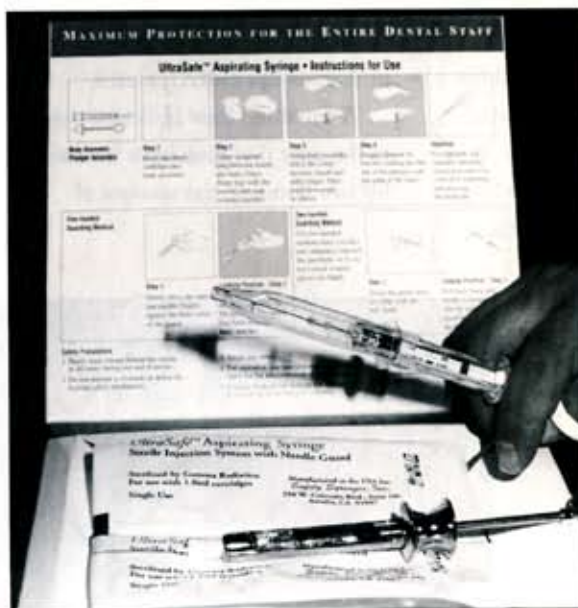
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MARKET SHOWCASE

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the historic model was always exposed, unless manually recapped. With importance of infection control today, protecting dental workers and patients from used needles has become more important than ever. The UltraSafe syringe's unique design protects patients and dental workers from unnecessary risks.

For more information about the UltraSafe aspirating syringe, contact Tony Perez, president, Safety Syringes, Inc., 818-821-1121.



UltraSafe aspirating syringe

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Dress professionally, smile warmly, shake hands when introduced to people, and let them see you get along swimmingly with the other applicants.

✓ Demonstrate your interest by asking questions. Some questions are obvious ("How often would I be on call?"). A creative question may make them remember you ("What is the one most important thing that a resident learns in this program?").

✓ Let your first choice know it. Write your first choice a letter to let them know that you would immediately commit to their program if you were given the opportunity, and then phone the program director to repeat the sentiment.

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