

Fourth-Year Curriculum

What is an appropriate philosophical approach to the senior year? (Louis Binder, MD)

In contrast to the junior year, the senior year is predominantly an elective year (students can select the majority of their rotations, usually the only year in their pipeline of medical education when they will have this opportunity) and is less rigorous than the junior year. The other major difference which makes the senior year more difficult is that the focus on medical education and professional development must be balanced with a priority of "seeking a job" for the next year. The distraction of this priority varies with each student's situation - some will be minimally impacted, while others will find the residency application process a major distraction in the senior year.

How do I prepare for a residency in Emergency Medicine? (Wendy C. Coates, MD)

You should spend a month in a busy ED, preferably one with an emergency medicine residency, where you can experience first-hand the exciting opportunities available within the specialty. There, you will work with board-certified emergency physicians, EM residents or both. Visit the student rotation list on the website. The remainder of your senior year should be spent exploring various medical, surgical, and pediatric electives to strengthen your background. Some students participate in an EM research project, while others become involved in local or national EM organizations.

What breadth of electives should I take? (Louis Binder, MD)

In general, a broad based senior year, in preparation for the broad based specialty of Emergency Medicine, is a good idea. Virtually anything taken will have applicability to Emergency Medicine. In general, the four best experiences as preparatory rotations for an Emergency Medicine rotation or career include Cardiology (particularly CCU critical care experience), Radiology (reading plain films, CT, ultrasound), Orthopedics (fracture management and musculoskeletal exam), and Intensive Care experiences. Other useful rotations include Internal Medicine, Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Neurology/Neurosurgery, Anesthesiology, Surgery and/or Trauma Service experiences, Toxicology, and Ophthalmology/Otolaryngology.

What extracurricular content would be appropriate to consider in the senior year? (Louis Binder, MD)

Research, community service, international experiences, organizational involvements, or pursuit of additional degree training (public health, business, administration, education, etc.) could all be considered, depending on specific interests. None of the above are required as an applicant to Emergency Medicine programs, so do not feel obligated to undertake such activities if you are not truly interested in them for their own sake. Additionally, heavy emphasis in one or more of these areas will generally not compensate for academic deficiencies in the medical curriculum. However, if you are so inclined, such experiences can be invaluable developmentally. As with rotation choices, selection of such extracurricular experiences should be carefully considered and sequenced appropriately in the senior year amidst other priorities.