# Run the Interview Gauntlet!

## A Virtual Seminar to Empower Senior Medical Students in the Match During COVID -19

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## INTRODUCTION

- COVID-19 has disrupted medical education in many ways, including the residency interview process. After the ACGME mandated in June 2020 that all interviews be conducted virtually, medical schools adapted the student advising programming for these unprecedented times.

- According to the AAMC, PGY1 applicants tend to be initially chosen for interview based on academic achievement but ranked according to interview performance.[1,2] Psychiatrists have a unique opportunity to educate, assess, and provide feedback about communicating effectively and professionally during anxiety-provoking situations.

- Additionally, psychiatrists are more familiar with virtual means of communication, such as telehealth, compared to other medical specialties, thus there is significant potential for advising effectively.

- Although different preparations of interview help are in place for students, data on interview success and Match outcomes have not been studied in the context of virtual interviewing.
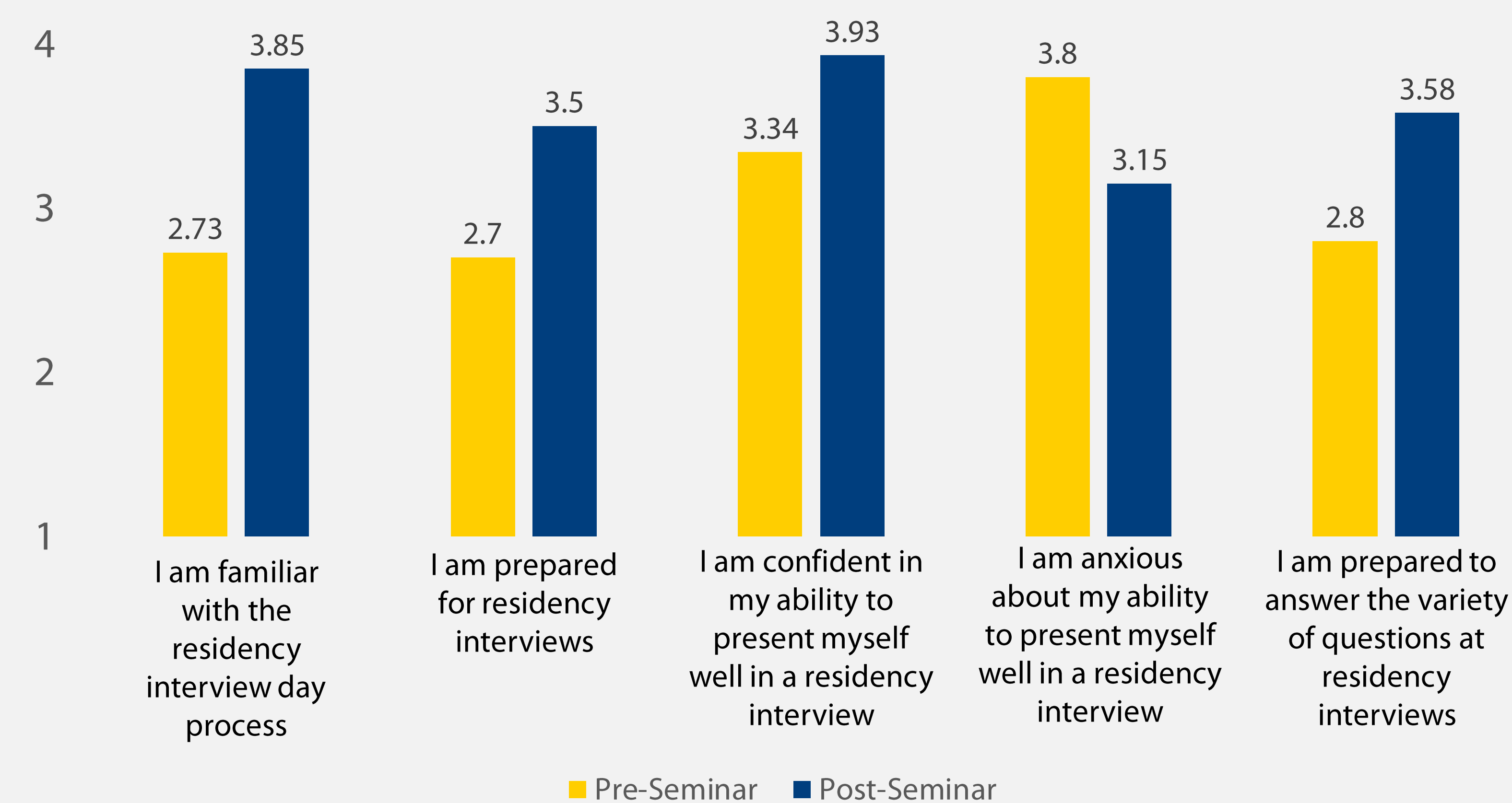
## PURPOSE

- Construct a structured virtual mock residency interview seminar to address medical school core competencies.

- Provide constructive feedback effectively to medical students in order to improve their residency interview performance and likelihood of a successful match in the new setting of virtual interviewing.

## METHODS

1. Fourth-year medical students from The University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences were invited to attend the Run the Interview Gauntlet interview seminar, which occurred the week prior to National Resident Matching Program (NRMP®) registration.

2. This IRB-approved seminar occurred virtually on the Remo platform. Remo differs from other commonly used virtual meeting platforms (e.g. Zoom, WebEx, Teams). The aesthetic and functionality contributed to a user-friendly experience that paralleled what an applicant would likely encounter on an in-person interview day.

3. Participants were provided pre-surveys asking for self-reflection of their virtual interview comfortability and acumen. A didactic about the format of residency interviews, impact of COVID-19 on changes to the interview season, frequently asked interview questions, and the importance of the interview in different fields according to the NRMP® statistics was presented by psychiatric faculty, followed by mock interviews with immediate feedback provided by both psychiatrists and physicians that were specific to student interests.

4. Participants were debriefed about their experiences and provided take-home additional interview questions. Post-surveys were distributed to assess change in participant's virtual interviewing skillset.

## RESULTS

- 78 medical students and 22 physician-interviewers participated in the seminar

- 40 participants completed surveys

- 9 specialties were represented: Psychiatry, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Anesthesia, Emergency Medicine, ObGyn, Rheumatology and Pediatrics

- 100% of respondents indicated that the seminar helped for residency interview preparation in general, helped prepare for specific interview questions, was a valuable use of time, and would recommend the seminar to peers

- Participants rated their agreement to survey questions on a Likert Scale of Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), with averaged totals identified below.



Bar chart (Pre-Seminar / Post-Seminar):
- I am familiar with the residency interview day process: 2.73 / 3.85
- I am prepared for residency interviews: 2.7 / 3.5
- I am confident in my ability to present myself well in a residency interview: 3.34 / 3.93
- I am anxious about my ability to present myself well in a residency interview: 3.8 / 3.15
- I am prepared to answer the variety of questions at residency interviews: 2.8 / 3.58
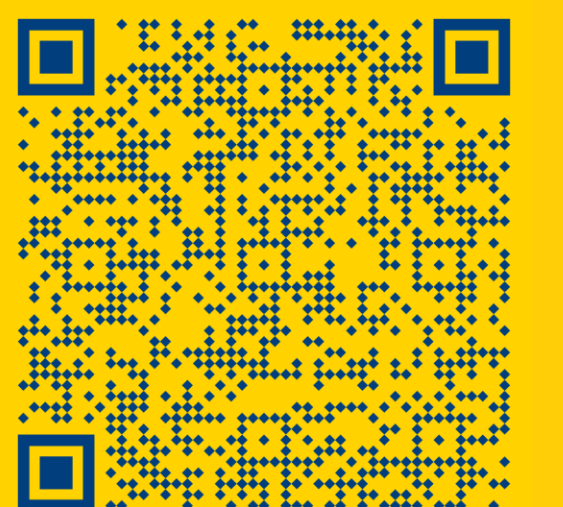
## DISCUSSION

- Our results indicate that the seminar was useful to the medical students by increasing knowledge of the interview day and improving confidence in their interview skills.

- Limitations: while 44.5% of the total M4 population participated in the seminar (78), only 22.8% of the total M4 population (40) completed the pre and post seminar survey.

| | Pre-Survey | Post-Survey | Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge Base | 20% | 85% | 336% |
| Preparedness | 7% | 55% | 653% |
| Confidence | 51% | 75% | 47% |
| Level of Anxiety | 78% | 40% | 95% |

## CHALLENGES WITH WEB-BASED INTERACTIONS

- **Work harder to process non-verbal cues**
  - Interpret facial expression, tone, pitch of voice, body language
  - Multi-tasking to simultaneously process visual information
  - Behavior is different in video-encounters
  - Lag due to internet conduction creates disruptions in flow
  - Conscious decisions about whether to speak
  - Impact of constant gaze causing anxiety
  - Attempts to emote more to compensate for other challenges

- **Applicant factors**
  - Background visual (e.g. clutter, paintings)
  - Pets, Privacy
  - Interruptions (e.g. phone calls, computer notifications)
  - Availability of backup method of interview

- **Technological limitations**
  - Wi-Fi coverage, bandwidth and/or speed
  - Computer specifications (memory, RAM)
  - Webcam capabilities
  - Microphone capabilities
  - Lighting

### FOR MORE INFO & HANDOUT



## CONCLUSIONS & REFERENCES

- The virtual interview experience for The Match 2021 was a learning process for all involved. However, use of mock interviewing and preparations helped to highlight the ease of which the field of psychiatry transitioned to telehealth at the onset of the pandemic.[3]

- This seminar provided students with knowledge, practice, immediate feedback on verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and familiarity with the interview process – all occurring virtually. In addition, students learned how to best present themselves virtually which minimized the challenges of web-based versus in-person interactions.

- Institutional IRB approval was obtained in order to find additional correlations between participation and match outcomes. A pre- and post-seminar survey was completed, and a third post-match survey will be completed to assess interview growth and gather match results. The control group will be the non-participants that complete the post-match survey.

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