

Resident Start Date

At the ABS meeting in January 2014, the directors unanimously passed a resolution to begin a concerted effort to investigate the feasibility of moving all fellowship (ACGME and non-ACGME) start dates from July 1 to August 1. The fellowship length would not be affected, but the start date and end date would be delayed by a month.

The advantages of the August 1 fellowship start date are the following:

- 1) Time for residents to finish General Surgery training and move. All general surgery chief residents would have the opportunity to complete all weeks of their chief year, without the need to take vacation or otherwise miss time to allow them to move and complete orientation activities for their fellowship. The majority of general surgery programs have an end date of June 30 but with start dates of July 1 for fellowships, most residents concentrate vacation at the end of their residency year or, in some cases, go AWOL to allow for moving and new fellowship orientation activities. (As a work around to this long standing issue, there are some GS residency programs that have moved their year to a 'third week of June' start and end date, but per the GS program director association, some are not permitted to do this by their local GME standards that control resident payment).
- 2) Time to study for General Surgery written boards which would be administered in July instead of August.
- 3) There would be seasoned fellows in the hospital from July 1 to 31 each year to provide coverage and supervision for the new residents, potentially diminishing the "July effect" on outcomes that has been well demonstrated with NSQIP data. This potential quality benefit is expected to resonate with the public, who are looking to organized medicine to make structural changes to improve quality and safety.
- 4) Time for a skills 'boot camp' if one is required or desired by the fellowship.

The disadvantages are the following:

- 1) Graduating chief residents would have a month without salary and health insurance. They would need to obtain COBRA interval health insurance. This generally hasn't been a problem at the completion of fellowship, where most trainees take 1 or more months before starting their new jobs.
- 2) Orientation at the new hospital for fellows would be separated from other new trainees.

Ortho fellowships have started on August 1 since the 1990s and do not view the disadvantages above as significant; in fact, the fellows love it because of the opportunity to get written boards out of the way before fellowship begins.

There is a lot of movement forward on this change involving many stakeholders. Several fellowships have issued letters of endorsement. The August 1 start date is not firm, but the ability for GS residents to stay in their programs until June 30 is. Written exam will definitely move to July, likely in the first half of the month to accommodate fellowships starting before Aug 1.