What NOT to do when applying or interviewing for residency

1. Everything in your application matters but one of the most important things is the letters of recommendation. Do not select the chair of the department or a well-known Neurologist as your letter-writer if he/she does not know you well. Select people who can speak in detail about your skills and attributes.

2. Do not write a personal statement more than 1 page long and keep the reviewers’ attention by making it unique.

3. If you are unsure what subspecialty you want to pursue upon graduation from residency or what you see yourself doing in general, just say so. It is better than to sound unrealistic by listing 100 things you want to do.

4. If you are applying for Neurology and another specialty simultaneously, do not lie about it if it comes up. You might even consider being completely open about it.

5. When you interview, do not be negative. Happy, enthusiastic people are much better liked.

6. Don’t speak badly about other medical students from your school applying to Neurology. It will not help your own application. Additionally, do not put down your significant other during any point of the interview visit. It speaks of poor manners.

7. In general, think carefully about what you say. Ask yourself if what you say can help you or hurt you.

8. Do not answer with “yes” and “no” only. Elaborate a bit. The interviewers are trying to get to know you.

9. Do not talk about your personal medical, psychological or emotional conditions unless something specifically comes up in a conversation or you feel you must inform a potential training program about an issue which can affect your performance.

10. When dining with the residents or interacting with them, be normal and down-to-earth. You need to make them think they want to take call with you.

11. Don’t take over the conversation completely without letting other applicants speak when in a group with them. Don’t be the one who never says anything either.

12. Don’t ask irrelevant questions just to ask something.

13. Don’t ever be rude to the coordinator/administrator/manager of the residency program. It does matter!