

MCEP Residency Spotlight: Spectrum Health Grand Rapids/MSU

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Quick Facts

Location
Grand Rapids, MI

Length/Type
3 year MD

Training Site
Community

ED Volume
165,000

Shift Length
9 or less

Shifts per Month
19-21

Elective Weeks
8

Critical Care
16

Ask the Program Director: Dr. Bryan Judge

What is your programs philosophy?

We have a long tradition of excellence and produce top-notch EM clinicians. Our program is committed to and invests in resident education and professional development so they have the skillset required to care for patients in any situation. In order to treat patients at their worst moments, we have to be at our best at all times.

What sets your Emergency Medicine Residency program apart from others?

Our program has been around for 40 years, and is one of the oldest programs in existence with continual ACGME accreditation. We are hidden gem...one of the highest volume centers in the nation with 165,000 visits annually between our children's hospital and adult site, essentially under one roof. We have opportunities that other programs can't offer, such as a rural experience, a toxicology rotation, and also a robust ultrasound program.

What type of population does your base hospital serve?

Our hospitals treat patients from both urban and suburban communities. Our catchment area consists of about 1.3 million people, with Grand Rapids being primarily urban, and multiple suburban areas nearby that we draw patients from as well.

Does your program provide research opportunities? Is research required?

All of our residents participate in research activity and produce a scholarship project by the time they graduate. Our Research Director, Dr. Jeff Jones is nationally known, and he does a fantastic job in exposing our residents to the fundamentals of evidence-based medicine and research.

Where are your graduates? Academic vs community hospitals, geographic areas?

Most of our graduates end up in a community practice setting, however we usually get 1 or 2 graduates every year who pursue a career in academic emergency medicine. We tell our prospective applicants and residents that they will be well prepared to practice wherever they want to, whether it is a community or academic setting. Approximately 40% of our graduates stay in West Michigan, while the others tend to return to the region where they have family roots. Currently we have over 300 graduates across the nation, which has proved very useful for our graduates when networking in search of employment opportunities

What is your advice for students who are considering Emergency Medicine?

My advice is to pursue your passions, but to be realistic about your abilities/suitability for the practice of emergency medicine. It is NOT for everyone! Students should sit down with an advisor to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and the "plusses and minuses" of emergency medicine so that they are sure they are making the right choice for the next 30-35 years. Choosing any career in medicine is a life-long commitment, and medicine can be tremendously challenging, but also very rewarding. Therefore, they need to make sure they choose wisely. If a student has determined that emergency medicine is a good fit for them then they should expose themselves further by volunteering in an emergency department, pursuing EM research opportunities, or joining an Emergency Medicine Interest Group.

What part of a medical students application do you consider most important?

The entire thing! In considering whether or not a student will be a good fit for our program, we carefully analyze every aspect of a student's application...academic performance, comments from a Dean's letter, as well as life and work experiences...all of it matters. If a student has a "hiccup" or two in their file then they can explain themselves on their personal statement or during the interview.

What is something that sets a great applicant apart?

Their ability to interact with people...are they the type of person who is going to be able to consistently provide compassionate and competent care to another human being in their time of need?

What do you look for when an applicant comes to interview?

It really comes down to the whole package...does an applicant possess the academic and personal qualities that will help them succeed in the field of emergency medicine? Are they personable, make good eye contact, and delve into detail when they are asked specific questions? Most importantly, an applicant should stay true to their self without trying to impress during their interview with faculty or residents.

Ask the Residents: Dr. Mariah Barnes

What made you choose Emergency Medicine?

In medical school I found that I was interested in multiple specialties and enjoyed all of my rotations. The end of my third year I rotated through the Emergency Department and was immediately hooked. The fast paced environment, with varying medical cases requires you to be proficient in multiple areas of medicine.

What is your 'typical' day like as a resident?

BUSY! We see high acuity adult and pediatric patients in one of the nation's busiest centers – 165,000 pediatric and adult patients annually. We staff directly with our attendings and work closely with our co-residents and midlevel staff.

Why did you choose the program that you currently attend?

I had the opportunity to rotate through the Spectrum Health/Michigan State University Emergency Medicine Residency Program as a medical student. The breadth of disease and different patient populations seen in the department was impressive. Yet, as busy as it is, the department still offers ample learning opportunities and the longitudinal pediatric experience is unparalleled. Over twenty-five percent of our time is spent in the pediatric ED (essentially under the same roof as our adult ED). The program is one of the oldest in the country...and it shows! It's well-developed and resident education and development are core values.

Do you live in the city your program is in? What do you like about the area?

Yes, I live in downtown Grand Rapids, within walking distance to the hospital. I love the area. My husband and I live on a quiet street next to a park, yet we can walk to all downtown restaurants and nightlife. We are close to beautiful Lake Michigan and multiple small inland lakes, with ample activities including running, hiking, and biking trails. Grand Rapids is also Beer City, thus there are ample breweries to visit and great restaurants. We have multiple large event venues that bring in great concerts, shows, and sports and various museums, art, and cultural events occur every weekend

What is your call/shift schedule like?

We work 18-21 shifts per four-week period, depending on your year in training. The shifts are eight hours of patient care, with an additional one to two for documentation. Depending on the month, residents cover two to three sick call shifts.

What activities are you involved in outside of the program?

I enjoy being outdoors and love the water. I spend my time off hiking, running, camping, paddle boarding, skiing, snowshoeing and trying the new breweries around town! Our program is also great about funding group activities including volleyball and kickball teams, baseball games and more.

What is your advice for students who are considering Emergency Medicine?

I think the most beneficial thing is to get yourself into the Emergency Department. Shadow, volunteer, and complete multiple away rotations to get as much exposure as you can to the everyday life of the ED. It's not for everyone - it is fast paced, stressful and nothing like any TV show portrays. Not every patient encounter is an easy one, you will see things that break your heart or make you furious. Be honest with yourself about whether you can thrive in high activity and high stress environments. If you can, wonderful...we could use more people like you! Work hard in school, volunteer, do research in EM, and get involved in activities outside of medicine.

How did you decide which programs to apply to?

First I found a good advisor, which I recommend everyone do, as they can help guide you through the process. Next my husband and I determined which region of the country we hoped to live in. There was no sense in applying to an area we wouldn't enjoy living. Next, figure out what you are looking for in a residency program. I knew I wanted a program affiliated with an academic center, but also wanted a smaller-sized city and exposure to rural community medicine. I was realistic about my academic record and my application as a whole before applying. You can and should aim high and go after the programs you are most interested in. Though it's not all about scores, they are something that needs to be taken into account when setting up your application list. Talk with your fellow classmates and anyone from years ahead of you, as they will be able to give you first-hand information you won't find anywhere else.

What type of setting do you plan on practicing in the future?

I see myself practicing medicine somewhere very similar to Grand Rapids, as it's the best of both worlds. I gain the urban experience, working in a downtown setting, with the additional opportunity to also work in community hospitals, treating rural populations.

What is something you wish you had known when applying to residencies?

I am very fortunate to be at a program with an exceptional longitudinal pediatric experience. When applying, I didn't realize how invaluable that would be. Treating children can be terrifying so it's great to be in pediatric ED, getting exposure every month (instead of going to a pediatric hospital only one or two months throughout residency). I would only consider applying to programs with this type of pediatric exposure.

For more information on Spectrum Health Grand Rapids/MSU Residency, please go to
<https://spectrumhealthgme.org/programs/emergency-medicine/>

Program Information provided via the EMRA Match tool
<https://webapps.acep.org/match#/>

Thank you Dr. Judge and Dr. Barnes for taking the time to complete our MCEP Spotlight!