

# Carmscast Episode 02: Getting to know a program and some thoughts on personal letters

## Introduction:

Welcome to Carmscast, the podcast that aims to answer all the questions medical students have when creating a competitive CARMS application. In today's episode, we cover how to get to know more about programs and give you some quick pointers on how to create your personal letters. Our expert guest is Dr. Kaif Pardhan. Dr. Kaif Pardhan is an emergency medicine physician and Deputy Chief of the ED at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. He serves as the Assistant Program Director for the University of Toronto's emergency medicine residency program. He also works as a pediatric emergency physician at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton.

## Questions

1. When we do get the opportunity to meet residents from a desired program what are some good questions to ask? (2:20)
2. When meeting a PD or APD from a desired program what are some questions we should consider asking? (3:58)
3. Are there any resources you would recommend to students wanting to learn more about residency programs? (5:35)
4. How important is it to meet with residents or PD or APD of a desired program? (8:13)
5. What is the best way to go about meeting residents/staff from another school? Especially now during the COVID pandemic? (11:40)
6. What was most important to you when you were choosing your residency program? (16:20)
7. What are your thoughts on students' parallel planning? (18:43)
8. When you are reading a personal letter, what are you looking for? (21:57)
9. How important is it to create a unique letter for each application? (24:00)
10. How early would you suggest starting your personal letters? (26:14)
11. Do you think personal letters will take on added importance in this year's application cycle? (28:18)

12. We hear a lot about having a consistent and strong “story” in our application. Do you have any tips on how to get that “story” across and how important it is for you when looking through applications? (30:35)
13. Often reference letters will ask for applicants to touch on very broad topics, such as your career goals, why you chose a specific specialty, or your strengths and weaknesses as an applicant. These topics often can feel quite daunting when trying to meet word count limits of 500 - 750 words, do you have any advice on how to approach writing your letters in a strong yet succinct manner? (33:14)
14. How important is following the word limit provided by some programs, and for personal letters that do not have word limit, what length should applicants strive for in their letters? (36:27)
15. What are your suggestions for approaching the topic of personal strengths and weaknesses? (38:10)
16. Do you have any final tips for students applying to CaRMS in this year or future years? (40:40)

## References mentioned in today’s episode:

- [CaRMS Program Descriptions](#)