My name is Saif Ahmed, I’m a fifth year and I went to the National spring meeting for the American Association of Medical Colleges. The theme of the meeting was “Responsibility forming our future: Hitting the right note in Austin.” I arrived in Austin, Texas on Saturday, April 17 and left on Tuesday, April 20.

When I arrived to the conference the central regional breakout session had already started so I joined in on a group talking about what their school does to help with board preparation for second year students. From the University of Loyola they said that at the end of every block the professor would give them a handout of high yield boards information for students to keep. Also they would vote as a class on topics from any subject i.e. anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, etcetera for professors to come in and talk about again. If the students did not initially like the professor that taught the topic they would try to find another professor to teach or staff physician to lecture. If it was a professor that taught the course initially they worked it out so they would be compensated for their time. They would also give the professor a copy of first aid so they can try to teach from their while reviewing a high yield board topic. A big issue with the professors at all the medical schools was the underlying sense that students only wanted them to teach towards step one as opposed to learning the topic well. The best way they found to circumvent this problem was to be careful with the words they chose when they approached faculty regarding this. At Mayo University they would build into the tuition costs a question bank, three NBME practice tests, and certain prep books. They said their average Step one score increased from 219 to 232. At another school they would have one day of board prep set out each week during their second year. Another popular way to help younger students was to have members of AOA help form study plans for students as well as hold review sessions that are part lecture part questions sessions. Third years were also noted to help second years via study groups.
Another hot topic in the regional session was computer based testing. Many of the schools in the Chicago area were completely computer based for all exams. They would all go to different computer labs or have laptops set up in auditoriums and take their test. Immediately after the test they would get their raw score for the test. The test would then be available for review up to two hours afterwards and during this time they could dispute any questions that they had. They said their IT department was able to set up their tests so that they were more like Step one format wise. They have not looked back to see if this has increased board scores in any way though. Another school had a laptop fee built into their tuition and they would take all their tests in wherever they had class usually and just log in using a secure browser.

Under the new laws surrounding health care one plus did surface for medical students. The government will be in charge of all student loans starting July 1st 2010. This means that the middle man i.e. Nelnet and other private loan companies are cut out of the equation and we are able to obtain lower interest rates all from one loan company. This overall saves the U.S. government somehow 68 billion dollars. This translates to our interest rates being capped at 7.9 percent when we take out private loans. This is down from 8.5 percent previously. This doesn’t seem like much but every penny helps. Also regarding residency spots, we were not able to expand the number of spots, but graduate medical education was able to re-distribute any spots that were still available to area of primary care medicine i.e. family medicine, pediatrics, surgery, internal medicine.

Regarding class expansion and the match there are some pretty serious changes. It was mandated by the government that all U.S. medical schools expand their class size by 30 percent by the year 2014. This is to try to combat the physician shortage that is projected to be at 160,000 in the coming years. The amount of spots available in the match was about 29,000,
while about 30,543 people applied for these spots. This is an increase of 584 from the previous year. Of the 30,543 about 16,070 are U.S. seniors and they have appreciated a match rate of about ninety-three to ninety-four percent fairly consistently. They then went to go on talking more about statistics of the match, which can all be found on the NRMP website. Some questions I asked the Executive Director of the NRMP, Mona Singer, were “Is there going to be a charting outcomes for 2010?” This is a PDF that contains the average board score and characteristics of people that did and did not match. There was one released in 2009 and is on the NRMP website. She said that there will not be one released because it costs far too much to gather all the data. Another question I asked her was if it was possible to let students know what field they matched when they find out if they matched or not. She said that the NRMP will not do this out of tradition alone. She said they have been doing it this way for the past fifty years and do not plan on changing. I asked if there was an actual reason. She again said it is purely out of tradition.

The last workshop that I went to was regarding the managed scramble This is set to take affect for the 2012 class. The NRMP and ERAS representatives said they have the capacity to run implement the managed scramble for 2011, but decided to tweak the program a little before “setting it out into the wild.” With the managed scramble being implemented gone are the days of people grabbing everyone they know to call or fax residency programs to try to obtain a spot. It will all be through ERAS applications in 2012. Students will be able to submit their applications online to schools that have positions available and then wait for any offers that they might receive. They will be notified of offer on Wednesday and they will have two hours to either accept or reject this offer, all electronically This process will occur in cycles starting at noon on Wednesday of match week and continue until Friday. Students will be able to receive
several offers at the same time through this system. With this new schedule match day will be 
moved to Friday of match week as opposed to Thursday.

Affecting 2011’s match class is a partial introduction of the managed scramble. A few 
programs in family, IM, surgery, anesthesia, pediatrics, psychiatry, and emergency medicine 
have started to use the managed scramble. This will allow students to submit their applications 
using ERAS. There was an average of 164-518 applications per open spot using this system. 
Also match day will be moved to Friday instead of Thursday for the class of 2011.

Overall I thought this was an excellent conference for me to attend as I was able to learn 
about all the things that I’m worried about for next year’s match, be able to ask questions directly 
to the people that make decisions regarding the match, and most importantly report back to 
students on what is occurring at other medical schools and how we can try to improve our own 
medical school by using the tips I have learned. If anyone has any questions regarding this please 
feel free to contact me.