Medical Specialties and Competitiveness

Medical specialties can be organized into three tiers based on competitiveness. These tiers are meant to provide a general guideline to students, but students must be aware that there are other aspects of individual programs that affect competitiveness, including geographic location and setting. The number in parentheses represents the national average COMLEX Level 1 for students who matched in each specialty, but please note that this average score only represents students who matched into osteopathic programs. For USMLE score data for allopathic residencies, visit the NRMP Charting the Outcomes of the Match report.

If you have questions about medical specialties or competitiveness, please schedule an appointment with a CTL staff member or your MSPE advisor.

Tier 3 (most competitive):
- Otolaryngology (629.6)
- Urology (605.3)
- Dermatology (601.8)
- Plastic Surgery*
- Radiology Oncology*
- Orthopedics (597.7)
- Neuro Surgery (576.8)
- Ophthalmology (571.1)

Tier 2:
- Diagnostic Radiology (547.6)
- General Surgery (530.6)
- Anesthesiology (523.5)
- Emergency Medicine (513.2)
- Neurology (502.1)
- OB/GYN (493.3)
- Internal Medicine (484.1)
- Pediatrics (475.8)
- PM&R** (427.1)

Tier 1:
- Family Medicine (473.4)
- Psychiatry (460.8)

* = average Level 1 COMLEX score data not available
** = PM&R is a mid-tier competitive specialty; however, there are very few osteopathic PM&R programs in the nation, so this average COMLEX score can be somewhat misleading.

Source (COMLEX scores): 2014 Osteopathic GME Match Report