

# Coming Online

## March 2006 • Gastroenterology

### ERAS® and Gastroenterology Working Together

#### A Welcome from the ERAS Director



We are delighted to work with the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG), the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), and the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) to bring ERAS to Gastroenterology programs for the upcoming ERAS 2007 application season. You will join more than 5,000 programs that have abandoned burdensome paper-driven application processes for ERAS' streamlined electronic system. This newsletter is designed to introduce you to our service and provide important information to help your program prepare for your first application season using ERAS.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) developed ERAS—the Electronic Residency Application Service, in 1995 to transmit residency applications, letters of recommendation, MSPE/Dean's Letters, transcripts, and other supporting credentials from applicants and medical schools to residency program directors using the Internet. Ten years later, ERAS has expanded to the

fellowship community to bring you the ease, reliability, and security of ERAS application tools and information.

ERAS looks forward to working together to ensure a smooth transition of Gastroenterology into the ERAS family.

Best Wishes,

**B. Renee Overton**  
ERAS Director


#### ERAS Advantage

ERAS was first conceived as a solution to streamline the residency application process. As a result of its successful implementation in the residency community, ERAS Fellowships was launched in 2003 to bring the ease and convenience of the ERAS service to fellowship programs.

ERAS Fellowships has enjoyed success, expanding to over 15 specialties in the past two years. ERAS offers enormous advantages to programs over traditional paper-driven application processes. ERAS uses the latest technologies to deliver an electronic solution to make receiving, reviewing and evaluating applicant materials a breeze. ERAS gives you time to focus on the content of applications, not on receiving and processing them.

ERAS also provides access to national and specialty-specific statistics on applicants and applicant behavior. Use ERAS statistical data to track longitudinal data on your program as well as national applicant pool data for all Gastroenterology programs.

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 **ERAS Fact:** ERAS has saved over 22,622,500 documents from being processed by mail per year!

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#### ERAS Basics

The ERAS solution is made up of four components: the applicant Web site MyERAS, the Dean's Office Workstation (DWS), the Program Director's Workstation (PDWS), and the ERAS PostOffice (ERASPO). Using a Web browser, applicants complete an application, select programs, and assign supporting documents using a secure site. They then submit these files to the ERASPO for processing.

The ERAS Fellowship Document Office (EFDO) uses the DWS to scan and store applicant transcripts, MSPE/Dean's Letter, and letters of recommendation and transmit them to the ERASPO.

Fellowship programs use the PDWS to connect to the ERASPO to download applications, and use their unique criteria to review applications.

## ERAS Documents

ERAS provides for a variety of supporting documents as part of application materials viewed through PDWS software.

Fellowship applicants complete a universal application detailing personal, educational, and extra-curricular information known as the Common Application Form (CAF). Applicants have the option of submitting with their application a personal statement, photograph, letters of recommendation (up to four, including program director's letter), USMLE and/or COMLEX transcripts, MSPE/Dean's Letter, and medical school transcript. As each program has its own unique process for reviewing applications, be sure to inform applicants of deadlines and required documentation for applying to your program. Programs may customize their application by designating which documents constitute a complete application for their program.



**Quick Tip:** ERAS allows you to print information to Adobe® for easy and secure electronic delivery of applicant information.

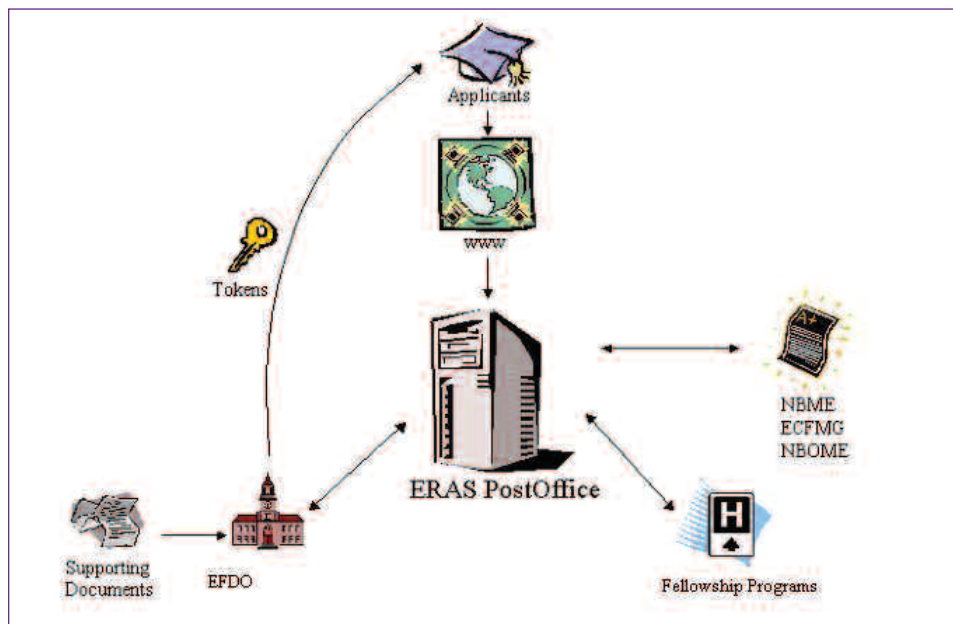
## Getting Started

While the National GI Societies and ERAS believe every program can benefit from the ERAS service, programs will individually decide to use ERAS Fellowships to receive applications. Registration runs from mid-January 2006 through April 2006 to provide ample opportunity for you to decide about ERAS.

Advanced preparation for ERAS has proven beneficial for newly participating programs. We suggest several steps you can take to make your transition to ERAS a smooth one.

### Assess Technical Needs

Involve your IT staff in your ERAS planning and implementation. They will be an excellent resource in helping you evaluate your current computer equipment and Internet connection to assess your ability to



accommodate ERAS equipment guidelines. They can also assist with installing the ERAS PDWS software and getting all necessary parties online.

Most programs will be able to use their current systems for ERAS, although some programs have chosen to purchase high-speed printers and extra memory to better accommodate optimized functioning of the ERAS software. Recommended technical requirements to support ERAS software are:

- Pentium 2.4 gh processor
- Windows XP
- 512 MB RAM
- Hard drive with 100mb free space and 1mb for each expected applicant
- HP printer (or compatible) printing 600 dpi with at least 8 MB of memory
- Monitor capable of displaying 1024 x 768
- Screen color depth set at High Color
- Access to the Internet
- LAN or shared drive for multi-user environments
- Back-up procedures for the ERAS database

For more information, review our *Minimum Requirements* located in the Technical Support section of our Web site at: [www.aamc.org/programs/eras/programs/techsupport](http://www.aamc.org/programs/eras/programs/techsupport).

### Take Advantage of Help Resources

ERAS PDWS is designed to be user-friendly; so training is not a necessity. However, training can help your staff to learn how best to use ERAS software to streamline your program's application process. ERAS offers these training options to help you get off to a great start with the PDWS:

- ERAS PDWS PowerPoint tutorials that users may download at anytime
- ERAS Program Director's Workstation Manual
- Sample data with fictitious applicant information to practice using the PDWS software
- ERAS instructor-led half day, hands-on PDWS training

Dates and other details about training can be found on our Web site at:

[www.aamc.org/programs/eras/programs/training](http://www.aamc.org/programs/eras/programs/training).

Our friendly and knowledgeable ERAS Help Desk analysts stand ready to assist you with your ERAS questions. They are available M-F, 8a-6p EST. Whether it's walking you through the registration process or helping you use ERAS features. Call 202-828-0413 or e-mail [erashelp@aamc.org](mailto:erashelp@aamc.org).

*Establish Program Requirements & Communication Strategy*

It is best to determine your minimum criteria for application to your program in advance. Determine which documents you will require for a complete application as well as any deadlines specific to your program. Ensuring a smooth transition to ERAS requires understanding the ERAS season timeline so you can coordinate your program activities accordingly. We provided this timeline in this newsletter for your convenience. Prepare information that highlights the attributes of your program and the characteristics you look for in a candidate; and let candidates know that applications will only be accepted via ERAS. Determine how this information will be communicated and update resources appropriately (i.e., Web site, brochures, letters, etc.). Reserve and outline interview dates in advance and hold a session to brief your interviewers on using the PDWS to view and evaluate application materials.



**Quick Tip:** ERAS lets you email applicants directly from the software!

**ERAS Frequently Asked Questions**

Still have some questions about ERAS? Review our answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about coming online with ERAS.

*Why should I use ERAS Fellowships?*

- ERAS saves time: All ERAS documents are downloaded and filed electronically—no more envelopes, no more sorting or filing by hand!
- Fast access to information: 95% of surveyed program users reported that ERAS speeds up the application process
- Customization: the PDWS software provides powerful tools to help you use your own criteria to review and select applicants.
- Pricing: ERAS is currently free to fellowship programs.

**ERAS Timeline**

Dates	Activity
January–April 2006	ERAS Registration
July 1, 2006	MyERAS Opens to Applicants
July–August & October 2006	PDWS Introductory Training
November 2006	PDWS Software Delivery
November 15, 2006	Applicants Apply to Programs
December 1, 2006	Programs Download Applications
May 31, 2007	ERAS Post Office Closes
June 2007	NRMP Medical Subspecialty Match Results
July 2008	Fellowship Training Begins

*How does ERAS impact my current timeline?*

ERAS does not establish application deadlines; individual programs set deadlines. Applicants are advised to contact programs directly for information about deadlines. Since applicants cannot begin transmitting their applications before November 15th, we strongly recommend to programs that they not set deadlines too early so applicants and the EFDO have a reasonable amount of time to get supporting documents into the system. Programs that establish clear directives and procedures for themselves and their applicants will pave the way for a smooth transition to ERAS.

*What's involved with ERAS Registration?*

In order for programs to use ERAS to receive applications, they must register with our service. A registration packet will be mailed to you in January 2006, outlining the registration process. It will also include a login ID and password to provide access to the ERAS Account Maintenance System where you will update your program's information.

*How much does ERAS cost?*

ERAS is free to fellowship programs. Costs to individual programs may include computer hardware and the program's connection to the Internet. Given the latest technological advances employed by institutions, most already meet ERAS system requirements.

ERAS is supported by fees paid by applicants. ERAS fees, per specialty, are: \$100 (includes up to 10 programs); \$10 each for 11-20 programs; \$15 each for 21-30 programs; and \$25 each for 30 programs or more.

*What is ERAS doing to ensure the security of documents sent over the Internet?*

ERAS works to protect document security in a number of ways. First, data is encrypted prior to being transmitted to the ERAS PostOffice and remains encrypted until after the program downloads it. Second, each ERAS user has a secure account and password that allows access only to one's own "mailbox" in the ERAS PostOffice. Third, we monitor activity on our PostOffice and are automatically alerted to any unusual activity. We are constantly reviewing procedures that will enhance the security of our service.

*Does registering me for ERAS obligate me to participate with the Match?*

ERAS is an independent application service that is not a part of the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) or any other matching service. However, ERAS software provides useful tools to assist programs in organizing rank lists for use in established matching services.

**ERAS**  
**Fellowships**  
Electronic Residency  
Application Service



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