How does one pick the best qualified applicant for a medical residency? One common criteria used to decide which applicants to invite for an interview is how many Honors grades a student received in their third year clerkships, believing that this will be a marker for distinction between students’ academic performance. The purpose of this study is to distinguish the statistical variation in Honors grades awarded to students based on institution and clerkship specialty. The results will ultimately allow resident selection committees to more appropriately compare applicants based on the ease of obtaining Honors grades in their particular institution, especially from schools that do not provide a class rank. Data was collected from the Medical School Performance Evaluations or MSPEs (formerly known as the “Deans’ letter”) from applications submitted to different University of Utah residency programs. In looking at 96 different U.S. medical schools from 2006 to 2014, there is a significant variation in Honors grades awarded within individual clerkship specialties where 5% of third year students received Honors in Obstetrics and Gynecology from one institution and 78% of students received Honors from another. Significant variation was found in all the other third year core clerkships: Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, Pediatrics and Surgery. Therefore, selection committees should consider additional factors, along with Honors grades, when selecting applicants for a residency position.
GRADING IN MEDICAL SCHOOL: ARE ALL HONORS CREATED EQUAL?
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Abstract
- How does one pick the best qualified applicant for a medical residency?
- This research compares the percentage of students who receive honors from different medical schools.

Introduction
- There are more US grad than there are residency positions.
- Honors may be used to distinguish students applying for residency positions.

Results
- Some schools give honors to more than half of their class. These schools make it difficult to choose applicants based on grades in the resident selection process.

Discussion
- Attending a medical school that gives honors to a large percentage of their students may not distinguish you in the selection process.
- Example of Marshall University SOM and Creighton SOM:

Conclusion
- Honors given by different Medical Schools are not distributed equally.

What’s Next
- What other ranking criteria can be used with this?
- Do schools follow trends based on location / region?