



Cross-Applications in Otolaryngology Residency: Trends and Influencing Factors

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BACKGROUND

Residency applications are highly competitive, with smaller specialties like otolaryngology–head and neck surgery (OHNS) facing intense pressure. To avoid going unmatched, many applicants employ cross-application, applying to both OHNS and other specialties. However, the prevalence and applicant characteristics of this practice remain unclear.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

To quantify prevalence of cross-application among OHNS applicants and identify **demographic, academic, and application-related predictors** of cross-applying.

METHODS

- Retrospective study of **2,440 OHNS applicants (ERAS 2020–2023)**.
- **Cross-applicant** defined as applied to OHNS + ≥ 1 other specialty.
- Compared applicant characteristics with **chi-square tests, t-tests, and multivariable logistic regression**.

RESULTS

53% (1,293/2,440) of applicants cross-applied.

Most common alternative specialties:

1. General Surgery (**36.6%**)
2. Internal Medicine (**20.8%**)
3. Anesthesiology (**12.1%**)

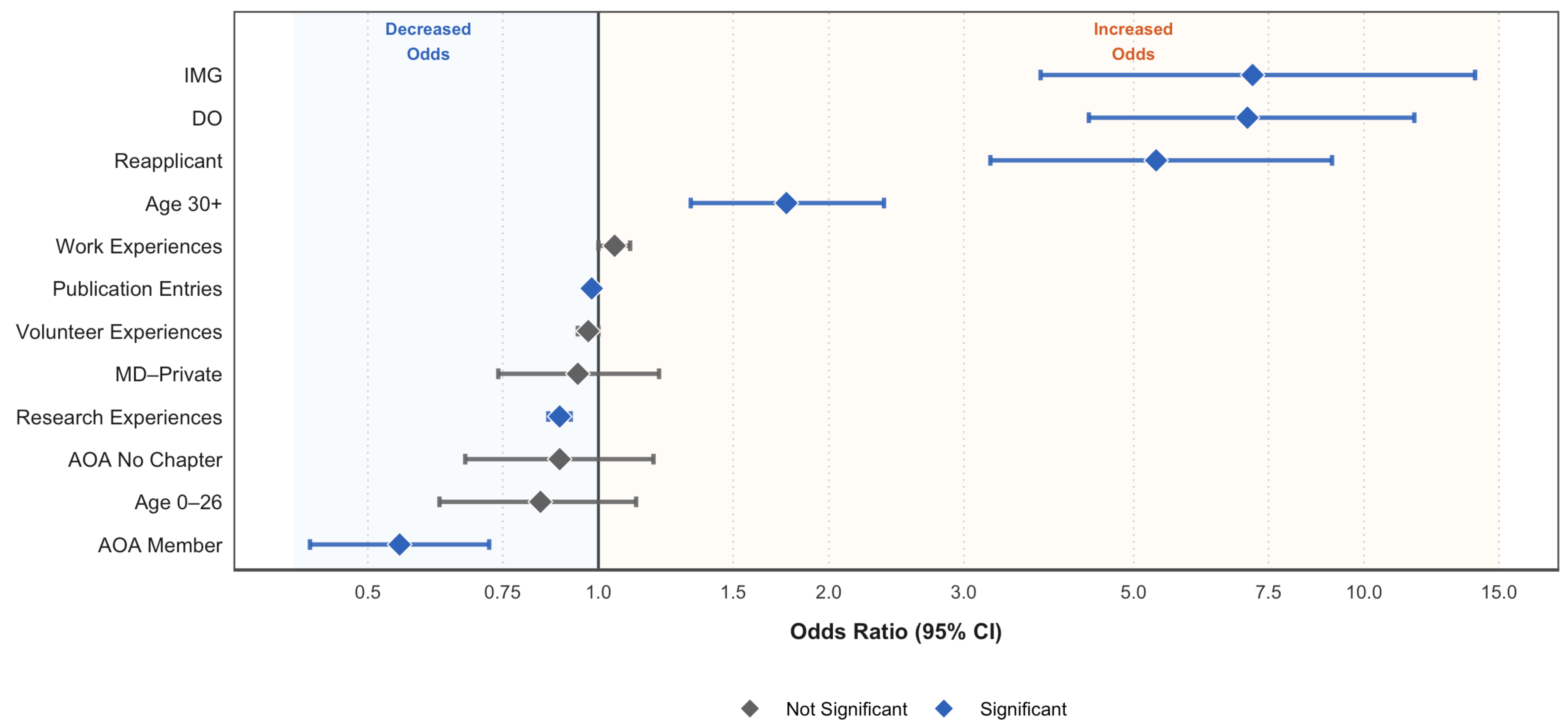
Key characteristics of cross-applicants:

- **IMGs:** 88.4%
- **DOs:** 86.0%
- **Age ≥ 30 :** 70.6%
- Fewer research experiences (**-1.5**) and publication entries (**-3.7**)

Independent predictors of cross-application:

- IMG (OR 7.15)
- DO (OR 7.04)
- Reapplicant (OR 5.35)
- Age ≥ 30 (OR 1.76)
- Fewer research experiences (OR 0.89 per additional experience)

Multivariable Logistic Regression Analysis | Odds Ratios with 95% Confidence Intervals



CONCLUSION

- Cross-application is **common among OHNS applicants** (53%).
- Cross-application is especially prevalent among applicants with **historically lower match rates** (IMGs, DOs, reapplicants).
- Academic strength (e.g., more research and publications, AOA membership) correlates with **exclusive OHNS application**.

IMPLICATIONS

- Advisors should **normalize cross-application** as a pragmatic strategy in competitive specialties.
- Individualized advising is critical, particularly for **certain applicant groups**.
- For OHNS residency programs, cross-application may not imply lack of commitment but rather reflect the realities of the match process.

