

1. If you are applying to a competitive program and do not mind matching to any school in Canada, it is strongly advised that you do electives in various locations. A reasonable plan would be to book one elective in your home school, one in your home province, one out East and one out West.
2. You may want to consider doing your home program elective early and away program electives later so that you transition from core rotations to elective rotations easier and perform at an elective student level earlier. During away rotations when you have to learn new environments, having prior clinical experience in a related field will be a big asset. The only exception is perhaps if you strongly prefer to match to your home school in which case you may do home electives later.
3. You should do electives in big programs first and small programs later. In big programs, you should ask for reference letters as you may or may not work with committee members. The residency committee will assess you based on their colleagues' opinions. In small programs, you typically will get a chance to work with many of the committee members. If you are unable to ask for a reference letter because it is too close to the CaRMS deadline, it is usually alright as most members of the committee will already know you.
4. Electives past the CaRMS application deadline but before interviews are particularly important as the committee already knows you on paper and will pay strong attention to how you perform clinically. They will also serve as a pre-interview screen to learn more about you. These electives may have a multiplying effect on your overall performance.
5. In general, try to book electives with committee members for schools you are strongly considering. It is also advantageous to book electives with staff who are well-known in their field so the reference letters will be well recognized across the country. For small programs, it matters less who you do electives with as smaller communities are often well connected. In big programs, you probably have a good chance of matching without worrying too much about who writes the actual reference letter.
6. Generally speaking, electives should not be used to explore career options (i.e. to rule in or to rule out specialty choices). You should try to decide on 1 or 2 specialties early on during medical school and utilize electives to optimize your match results.
7. When a program asks for a broad range of electives, make sure you do electives that are relevant to your specialty of choice and be able to justify why you did those electives in your interviews.

