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Introduction

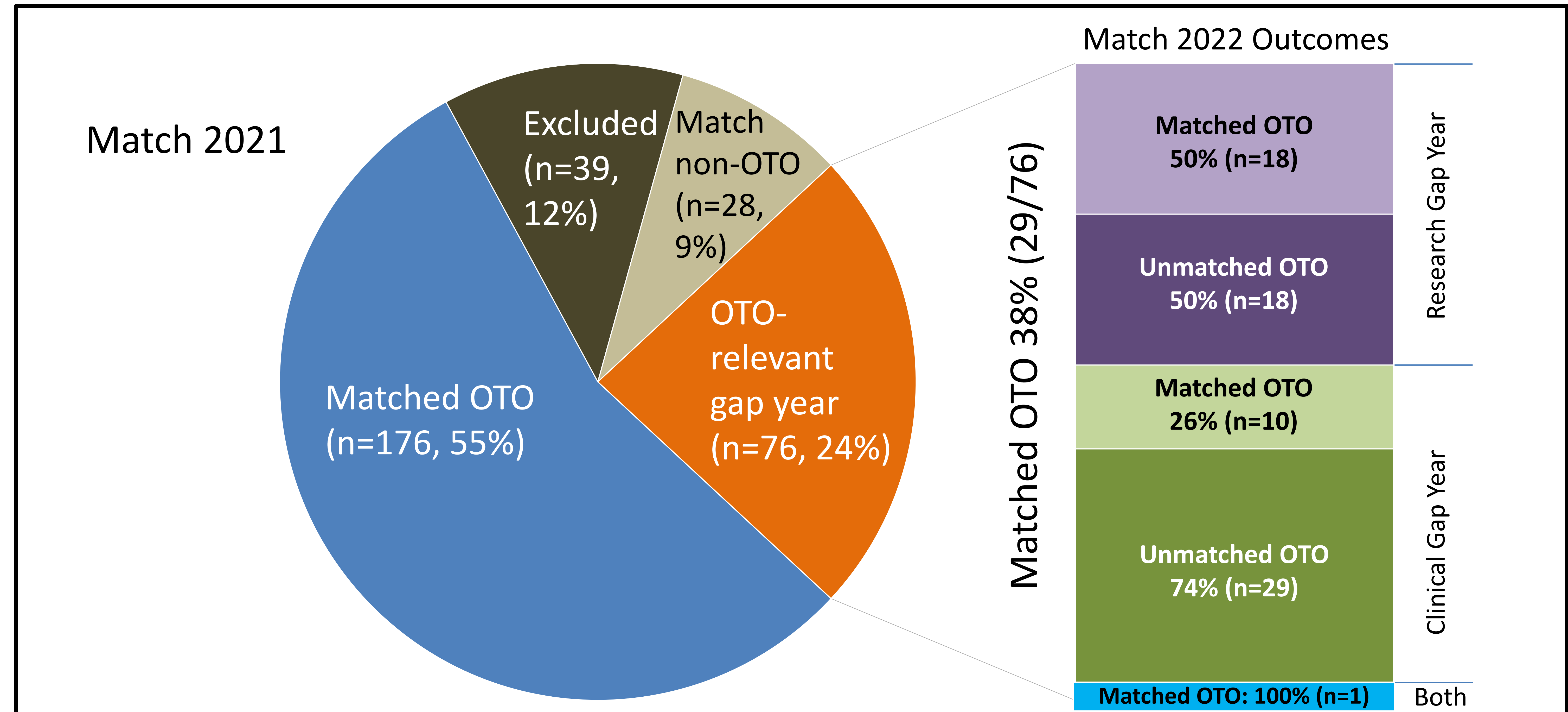
- The otolaryngology match is a competitive and challenging process to undergo as a medical student.
- While we may remain familiar with students who match into the specialty, there is minimal data on the course for re-applicants into the specialty, specifically those who complete gap years.
- This cross-sectional analysis aimed to better understand the career path and match rates of those who initially did not match into otolaryngology residency.

Methods

- A cross-sectional study investigating the match outcomes of otolaryngology applicants to the University of Missouri from the 2021 match cycle was completed.
- Data regarding applicant match outcomes was collected via the otomatch-spreadsheet and through publicly accessible Doximity profiles, residency program websites, social media platforms, and the researchgate.com website.

Results

- 319 applicants were investigated.
- 55% (176/319) matched into otolaryngology.
- 9% (28/319) matched into a specialty other than otolaryngology (dual applied, matched after SOAP).



- Excluded from further analysis: insufficient data regarding match outcome or gap year information (33), those completing gap years overseas (3), and those who completed research gap years outside of otolaryngology (3).
- 24% (76/319) elected to take an OTO-relevant gap year prior to reapplying.
- Those who completed a gap year were grouped to a clinical gap year or research year. 51% (39/76) chose a clinical gap year and 47% (36/76) a research gap year, with one applicant (1/76) completing both.
- The percentage of those matched into otolaryngology after a gap year was 38% (29/76) overall, with 26% and 50% matching after solely a clinical gap year or research gap year, respectively.

Conclusion

- The otolaryngology match continues to be difficult for re-applicants, with a large cohort pursuing a gap year after failing to match.
- Approximately half of those taking gap years performed a clinical gap year vs research gap year.
- As we were not able to confirm reapplication to otolaryngology among those who completed OTO-relevant gap years, true match rate comparisons cannot be made.
- However, those completing a research gap year were more likely to match into otolaryngology the following year.
- Further studies with larger sample sizes and longitudinal application data are warranted.