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Research Paper

Comparison of perceived personality traits between the pharmacy residents admitted through the match or scramble process

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The purpose of this study is to determine whether certain personality traits are as prominent in pharmacy practice residents who obtain positions through the post-Match process, previously referred to as the Scramble, as compared to residents who match directly with programs.

Methods: Pharmacy residency program directors (RPDs) across the United States were asked to complete an electronic survey that gauged RPD perceptions of 13 personality traits commonly seen in pharmacy residents. RPDs were requested to separately evaluate residents who Scrambled and Matched to their respective programs. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine factor structure for the personality traits and to assess whether factors associate differentially between Matched and Scrambled residents.

Results: A total of 1876 RPDs of post-graduate year one (PGY1), post-graduate year two (PGY2), and combined PGY1 and PGY2 pharmacy residency programs were contacted for study participation with a response rate of 21 percent. Demographic variables related to program type and number of residents per class were similar between Scrambled and Matched groups. The EFA identified two factors across 13 traits: we termed them as traditional traits and grit-like traits, and they significantly differed between the Scramble and Match groups. RPD perception of traditional traits (nine traits) were significantly higher in the Match group ($p < 0.05$), whereas perceived grit-like traits (four traits) were significantly higher in the Scramble group ($p < 0.0001$).

Conclusion: Residency candidates who Match versus candidates who Scramble are perceived to have unique and significantly different personality traits.

Introduction

Every year, pharmacy students and pharmacists compete for post-graduate year one (PGY1) and post-graduate year two (PGY2) residency positions. Eligible candidates are placed with programs through the Match, an event sponsored by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) through the National Matching Service, Inc. (NMS). In 2015, 5063 candidates entered the Match, with only 3308 of these candidates successfully securing a position.¹ The 1755 candidates remaining were given the option of

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Table 1
Personality traits.

Jellinek-Cohen et al. ⁵
Depth of knowledge*
Commitment to hard work
Ability to solve problems
Ability to articulate thoughts
Professionalism
Confident†
Ability to work with a team
Ability to listen
Compatibility with program
Ability to grow in knowledge
Realistic self-appraisal
Short Grit Scale ⁶
Setbacks do not discourage them†
Does not continually switch projects or ideas†
Unused traits from Jellinek-Cohen et al. ^{5,‡}
Maturity
Knowledge of program
Relevant questions asked
Personal appearance
Sensitivity to others' psychosocial needs

*Modified from "Fund of Pharmacy Knowledge" †Qualities related to Grit due to their presence in the Short Grit Scale⁶.

‡Part of the 16 personality traits that were found to be relevant primarily to the onsite interview and not accurate assessments of a residents continued performance.

entering the post-match "Scramble" for the remaining 382 positions.¹ The word "scramble" is a suitable description for the process: multiple candidates rush to connect with one of the limited number of remaining open residency positions in a short time frame. As the pool of candidates seeking residency placement for training increases, it is crucial that candidates are properly screened to ensure a positive residency experience and long-term success for the candidate and the program.

Literature describing the ideal traits of a pharmacy resident exists, but there lacks a universally accepted method for identifying these in a candidate.^{2,3} Few studies have assessed the qualities that Residency Program Directors (RPDs) find important when screening and interviewing specific candidates.^{4,5} One study, which surveyed RPDs of PGY1 and PGY2 programs, evaluated important factors identified during application review and the onsite interview.⁵ The onsite interview portion of the survey focused on 16 personality traits of residency candidates assumed to be desirable to RPDs (see Table 1 for a list of these traits).⁵ Researchers found that the top four perceived traits for both PGY1 and PGY2 candidates were compatibility with program, commitment to hard work, ability to work with a team, and ability to grow in knowledge.⁵ Although these traits are desirable, the authors may have overlooked the screening of non-traditional personality traits, such as tenacity, determination, and grit. These traits may not be as easily measured, but they are crucial for successful completion of a residency.

Grit is a non-traditional quality that is quickly gaining traction in the psychology community.⁶ Dr. Angela Duckworth, psychologist and creator of the Grit Scale, defines grit as consistency of interest and perseverance of effort.⁶ Grit is currently being studied as a personality trait consistent with success in different educational settings.⁵ The presence of grit as an individual personality characteristic has demonstrated incremental predictive validity of success measures beyond intelligence quotient (IQ) and conscientiousness.^{6,7} The Short Grit Scale showed grit scores in West Point cadets, National Spelling Bee Final Round participants, and Ivy League undergraduates was a positive predictor of high GPA.⁶ The evaluation of the presence of grit in the medical profession was studied related to attrition and psychological well being of general surgery residents.^{8,9} Residents with below-median grit were over twice as likely to leave their program prematurely.⁸ Despite the demonstrated relevance to healthcare residency programs, grit has not traditionally been used to describe the pharmacy community or pharmacy residents.

The process of securing a residency position through the Scramble is inherently different from the initial Match. The personality of the individual who is successful in the Match, compared to the Scramble, may be uniquely different. There have been no reported investigations into the differences between these two groups. The aim of this study is to determine if residents who obtain positions through the post-Match process are perceived by RPDs to have similar personality traits as compared to residents who match directly with programs. This study was completed prior to the initiation of a revised two-phase Match process that went live in 2016. A more robust explanation of the new two-phase Match as well as implications of this research on the new process is further explored in the discussion section.

Methods

RPDs received an anonymous web-based survey designed to evaluate the perception of personality traits in pharmacy residents who previously participated in their residency program. The investigators recognized the difficulty of acquiring accurate contact information for individual graduated residents and therefore RPDs perceptions were chosen as the primary metric over perceptions of past residents. Demographic information that described the type and size of the residency program was also collected from the

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