

Original Investigations

A Survey of Academic Radiology Department Chairs on Hiring Recent Graduates as New Attending Physicians

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Rationale and Objectives: To determine hiring preferences among academic radiology department chairs with emphasis on recent residency and fellowship graduates.

Materials and Methods: With the assistance of the Society of Chairs of Academic Radiology Departments (SCARD), an anonymous survey was distributed to academic radiology department chairs during the time period December 2014–March 2015, with additional reminder emails during the study period. Varied multiple choice questions were designed to gather information regarding program details; qualities most valued in new attending hires; level of difficulty recruiting subspecialty fellowship-trained radiologists; and the effect of the new ABR certification process on hiring practices. Descriptive statistics and analyses are reported.

Results: Surveys were completed by 79 of 184 eligible academic radiology chairs, a response rate of 43%. The most important hiring criteria cited were expertise in subspecialty, fellowship training, and perceived ability to work well with referring physicians. The most popular recruitment tools cited were hiring candidates from a chair's own program, journal ads, and academic networks. A minority of chairs (16%), primarily those of smaller departments, will not hire new graduates before completing board certification under the new certification structure ($P = .0143$).

Conclusions: Expertise in a candidate's subspecialty was consistently cited as the most important hiring criterion. Changes to the ABR certification process, however, will affect hiring decisions, particularly within smaller academic departments.

Key Words: Radiology residency; ABR certification; new hires; fellowship.

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The status of the radiology job market is a source of concern for radiology trainees. According to the ACR Commission on Human Resources Workforce Survey, job opportunities for radiologists in 2014 were close in number to those of residents completing diagnostic radiology training programs, with available jobs not necessarily in the subspecialty, geographic area, or type of practice an individual most desires (1). Furthermore, a recent analysis of the ACR Jobs Board revealed a high competitive index, with nearly two new job seekers for every new job posting (2).

These concerns are compounded by recent changes to the American Board of Radiology (ABR) certification process. Until recently, it was standard practice for residents to com-

plete ABR certification prior to graduation; however, changes in timing of the ABR diagnostic radiology certifying examination now places the examination 15 months after completion of residency training. Consequently, graduating residents and fellows have expressed concern, with possible good reason. A recent study indicates that a significant minority of private practice groups would not hire individuals who are not board certified, including recent graduates who have not had opportunity to complete the certifying process (3,4).

There exists only limited research focused on understanding chairs' perspectives regarding hiring in academic radiology departments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An anonymous 29-question online survey of academic radiology department chairs in the United States was conducted between December 2014 and March 2015 (Appendix A). The study was granted exempt status by the institutional review board of our hospital.

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Academic Department Survey Demographics

Demographic VS percentage

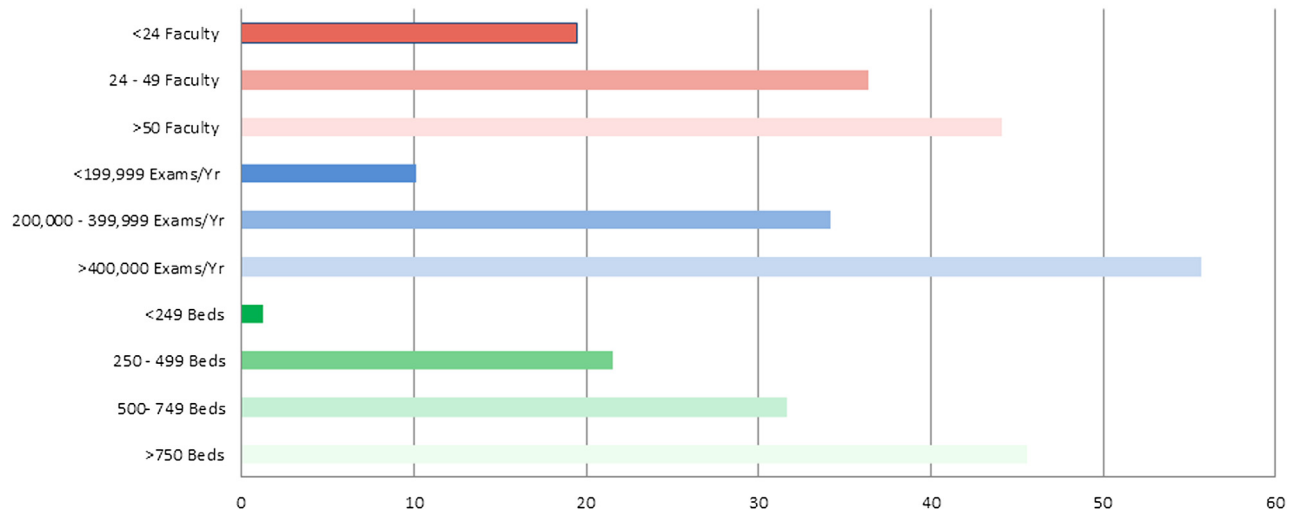


Figure 1. Characteristics of academic department survey respondents.

The 185 accredited nonmilitary US radiology residency programs were identified using the American Medical Association's Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive (FREIDA) database (5). The authors' institution was excluded from this study as the chair is a co-author, leaving 184 eligible respondents. Chairs' email addresses were identified using the FREIDA database and individual program websites. When necessary, individual residency program coordinators were contacted and asked to forward the survey link to the department chair. The survey was also distributed to all 127 active members of the Society of Chairs of Academic Radiology (SCARD), with a prompt to preclude initial respondents from completing the survey a second time. Participation was voluntary with no incentives offered for completion of the survey.

The authors created the online survey with the assistance of our hospital's research department. The survey inquires about hospital demographics, the importance of select candidate attributes and other factors that might influence hiring decisions.

The candidate attributes section uses a five-point rating scale regarding elements deemed important for hiring a new attending physician. Respondents were permitted to add text comments which they deemed important.

Categorical variables were summarized using frequency counts and percentages. Categorical rankings were summarized using weighted averages. The variable given the highest rank was assigned the largest weight of 3, whereas the variable with the lowest rank variable was assigned a weight of 1. Academic department demographics (including number of faculty members, of part time faculty, of radiologic examinations performed annually, and of attending job openings) were analyzed in terms of potential relationships to sur-

Job Openings During the Past Year

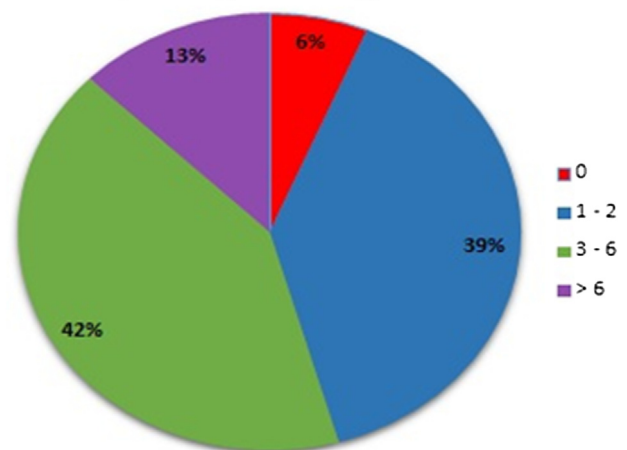


Figure 2. Job openings during the past year.

vey responses, using either the chi-square test or the Fisher exact test.

RESULTS

Of 184 eligible respondents, 79 completed the survey, a 43% response rate. A single duplicate responder was identified by a duplicate internet protocol address. The duplicate response was excluded. Demographic information of survey respondents is shown in Figure 1.

Ninety-four percent of chair respondents reported at least one or two attending job openings during the past year, 42% reported three to six openings, and 13% reported greater than six openings within the past year (Fig 2).

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