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Canadian Association of Radiologists Journal 67 (2016) 99–104

CANADIAN  
ASSOCIATION OF  
RADIOLOGISTS  
JOURNAL

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## Education and Training / Formation et perfectionnement professionnel

# Factors Influencing Radiology Residents' Fellowship Training and Practice Preferences in Canada

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study aimed to examine the postresidency plans of Canadian radiology residents and factors influencing their fellowship choices and practice preferences, including interest in teaching and research.

**Methods:** Institutional ethics approval was obtained at McMaster University. Electronic surveys were sent to second to fifth-year residents at all 16 radiology residency programs across Canada. Each survey assessed factors influencing fellowship choices and practice preferences.

**Results:** A total of 103 (31%) Canadian radiology residents responded to the online survey. Over 89% from English-speaking programs intended to pursue fellowship training compared to 55% of residents from French-speaking programs. The most important factors influencing residents' decision to pursue fellowship training were enhanced employability (46%) and personal interest (47%). Top fellowship choices were musculoskeletal imaging (19%), body imaging (17%), vascular or interventional (14%), neuroradiology (8%), and women's imaging (7%). Respondents received the majority of their fellowship information from peers (68%), staff radiologists (61%), and university websites (58%). Approximately 59% planned on practicing at academic institutions and stated that lifestyle (43%), job prospects (29%), and teaching opportunities (27%) were the most important factors influencing their decisions. A total of 89% were interested in teaching but only 46% were interested in incorporating research into their future practice.

**Conclusions:** The majority of radiology residents plan on pursuing fellowship training and often receive their fellowship information from informal sources such as peers and staff radiologists. Fellowship directors can incorporate recruitment strategies such as mentorship programs and improving program websites. There is a need to increase resident participation in research to advance the future of radiology.

### Résumé

**Objet :** L'étude avait pour objectif d'examiner les projets d'avenir des résidents en radiologie du Canada, les raisons qui motivent leurs choix en matière de formation postdoctorale et leurs préférences relatives à la pratique de la radiologie, y compris leur intérêt à l'égard de l'enseignement et de la recherche.

**Méthodes :** Le projet a été approuvé par le comité d'éthique de la McMaster University. Des questionnaires électroniques ont été acheminés aux résidents de deuxième à cinquième année des 16 programmes de résidence en radiologie du Canada. Ces questionnaires ont servi à cerner les facteurs influant sur le choix d'un programme postdoctoral et les préférences relatives à la pratique de la radiologie.

**Résultats :** Au total, 103 (31 %) résidents en radiologie de partout au Canada ont répondu au questionnaire électronique. Selon les résultats, plus de 89 % des résidents inscrits à un programme de résidence en anglais comptent entreprendre une formation postdoctorale, contre 55 % des résidents inscrits à un programme de résidence en français. Les meilleures perspectives d'emploi (46 %) et l'intérêt personnel (47 %) sont les principaux facteurs qui motivent les résidents à poursuivre une formation postdoctorale. L'imagerie musculo-squelettique (19 %), l'imagerie corporelle (19 %), l'imagerie vasculaire ou interventionnelle (14 %), la neuroradiologie (8 %) et l'imagerie gynécologique (7 %) figurent en tête de liste des programmes postdoctoraux les plus populaires. Les répondants ont indiqué que les pairs (68 %), les radiologistes en titre (61 %) et les sites Web des universités (58 %) sont leurs principales sources d'information sur les programmes de formation postdoctorale. Environ 59 % des répondants prévoient exercer leur profession dans des établissements universitaires. Le mode de vie (43 %), les perspectives d'emploi (29 %) et les possibilités d'enseignement (27 %) pèsent lourdement dans la balance. Au total, 89 % des répondants s'intéressent à l'enseignement, tandis que seulement 46 % des répondants souhaitent intégrer la recherche à la pratique de la radiologie.

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**Conclusions :** La majorité des résidents en radiologie compte suivre un programme de formation postdoctorale. À cet égard, les résidents se renseignent souvent auprès de sources non officielles, notamment des pairs ou des radiologistes en titre. Les directeurs de programme de formation postdoctorale peuvent tirer parti de stratégies de recrutement telles que la création de programmes de mentorat et l'amélioration des sites Web consacrés aux programmes. Il convient en effet d'accroître la participation des résidents à la recherche pour assurer l'avenir de la radiologie. © 2016 Canadian Association of Radiologists. All rights reserved.

*Key Words:* Education; Fellowship; Program Directors; Recruitment; Residency

The future of radiology in Canada is inherently dependent on the current generation of radiology residents. As radiology becomes more subspecialized, more trainees are completing fellowships and it is important to understand their fellowship choices and where they want to practice in the future. The first radiology fellowship was organized in 1959 at Columbia University [1]. Since the 1960s, there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of radiology residents pursuing fellowship training. For example, only 8% of U.S. radiology residents pursued fellowship training in 1984, compared to 52% in 1990, and 85% in 2000 [2,3]. A recent study of U.S. radiology residents demonstrated that the most popular fellowships were neuroradiology (22%), body imaging (21%), musculoskeletal (17%), and interventional radiology (13%) [4]. Data is limited on residents' fellowship choices in Canada, as recent studies have examined interventional radiology fellowship choices and surveyed program directors on resident fellowship choices [5,6]. There is no published study that has examined the factors that influence fellowship choices and practice preferences in Canada among radiology residents.

Research is imperative in order to advance any medical specialty, and radiology is no exception. However, as the demand of radiology services increases, radiologists are challenged to find time to devote to research activities [7]. It is imperative that radiologists and radiology residents engage in high-quality research that parallels the technological advances in medical imaging to ensure that radiologists continue to be leaders in the field. Radiology residents have the opportunity to play a substantial role in advancing the future of radiology. It is crucial to encourage and identify the proportion of residents who are interested in research to help guide them towards reaching their full potential. Furthermore, identifying and supporting residents' research interests can help shape and improve future residency and fellowship program curriculum development.

The aim of this study is to examine the postresidency plans of Canadian radiology residents, particularly in the areas of fellowship training and practice preferences. Specifically, this study will quantify and assess factors influencing Canadian radiology residents' fellowship choices, desired location of fellowship training, and interest in academic practice and research. The results of this study will provide a general profile of the radiology residents in Canada, which may help fellowship programs in Canada, United States, and abroad to attract desirable candidates and play an important role in future fellowship recruitment strategies.

## Methods

Institutional ethics approval was obtained at McMaster University's Hamilton Health Sciences and Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Board. An electronic survey was sent out to all 16 radiology program directors in Canada. The program directors were asked to forward the survey to all second to fifth-year residents in their respective programs. Participants were informed that each electronic survey was anonymous and the data collected would be used for research purposes only. The survey assessed the proportion of radiology residents in Canada who planned on pursuing fellowship training or have been accepted for fellowship training, as well as the subspecialty and location of their desired or accepted fellowship training. In addition, the survey assessed factors that influenced radiology residents to pursue specific fellowships, such as enhanced employability, personal interest, and the influence of mentors. Radiology residents' desired practice location, and intention to pursue an academic or community practice were also examined.

## Results

A total of 103 (31%) Canadian radiology residents responded to the online survey with responses from all 16 radiology residency programs in Canada. Over 62% of English-speaking programs were male compared to 45% of French-speaking programs (Table 1). In terms of level of training, the highest response rates were from

Table 1  
Demographic profile of respondents (N = 103)

Demographics	English (n = 72)	French (n = 31)	Total (N = 103)
Gender			
Female	38%	55%	43%
Male	62%	45%	57%
Level of training			
PGY2	37%	32%	35%
PGY3	18%	23%	20%
PGY4	27%	32%	29%
PGY5	18%	13%	16%
Do you have a graduate degree?			
No	88%	82%	86%
MSc	11%	18%	13%
MBA	1%	0%	1%
PhD	0%	0%	0%

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