

A Survey-Based Evaluation of the Radiology Residency Interview Process

Kiley Perrich, MD, Alan Siegel, MD, MS, Jocelyn D. Chertoff, MD, MS

Purpose: The aim of this study was to assess the diagnostic radiology residency interview process and determine variability among programs in their approach to interviewing candidates.

Methods: A survey of the residency interview process was sent to diagnostic radiology program directors through an e-mail address list provided by the Association of Program Directors in Radiology. Questions addressed were (1) the number of applicants interviewed per residency position offered; (2) the number of interviews scheduled for each applicant on the interview day; (3) whether interviews were performed by staff members, residents, or both; and (4) whether interviewers were granted time away from clinical services to interview applicants.

Results: Two electronic mailings were sent to 313 individuals. Responses were received from 89 of 188 accredited diagnostic radiology residency programs (response rate, 47.3%). The average number of interviews per residency position was 12.6 (range, 3-28), with university-based programs interviewing significantly fewer candidates (mean, 11.5) than non-university-based programs (mean, 15.3). The average number of individual interviews during the interview day was 3.9 (range, 1-8) per candidate at each program. Of responding programs, 69% of responding programs included residents in interviews, and 67% compensated their interviewing staff members with time off clinical service, with no statistical difference between large and small programs.

Conclusion: There is a large amount of variability present in the residency interview process. Applicants to programs may have very different experiences while visiting programs. Further study of this variation may allow programs to optimize resource utilization while maintaining success in the match process.

Key Words: Diagnostic radiology, residency, interview

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INTRODUCTION

The diagnostic radiology residency interview process is a complex, multifactorial endeavor intended to provide candidates and residency programs an opportunity to present themselves to each other for consideration in the National Resident Matching Program. Residency programs expend a significant amount of time, money, and effort each year to attract and evaluate students to achieve a successful match [1]. Previous studies have looked at factors that medical students use in ranking radiology and noted the importance of items such as happiness of

current residents and geographic location [1,2]. Pretorius and Hrung [2] found that the 2 highest ranked sources of information about the program were the interview day and the current residents, and that personal interactions with the residents and the program director were still within the top 7 factors, along with subtle items such as the perceived stability of the department. These studies suggest that the conduct of the interview day is very important to the outcome of the match.

For our study, we surveyed program directors to examine the degree of variability in the diagnostic radiology residency interview process and to determine whether staff members sacrificed academic time for this critical function or were released from clinical responsibilities. Although an earlier study by Otero et al [3] looking at criteria that were used for the selection of radiology residents did include the interview process, most of the parameters that we evaluated have

Department of Radiology, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, New Hampshire.

Corresponding author and reprints: Jocelyn D. Chertoff, MD, MS, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Department of Radiology, One Medical Center Drive, Lebanon, NH 03756; e-mail: jocelyn.d.chertoff@hitchcock.org.

not been previously studied and reported in the literature for any specialty.

METHODS

A survey (Table 1) was sent twice to 313 members of the Association of Program Directors in Radiology through its mailing list. Responses were not anonymized; programs may have more than one member of the association. Twenty-nine responses from fellowships, dedicated nuclear medicine residency programs and military programs, were excluded. Duplicate responses were eliminated. Incomplete or unclear responses were clarified by follow-up e-mail or through the Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database (FREIDA).

Programs were designated as university-based or non-university-based programs. The non-university-based group included both university-affiliated and community-based programs, as either self-designated in FREIDA or determined by contacting the programs directly. Programs were designated as large (≥ 6.5 residency positions per year; $n = 40$) or small (≤ 6 positions per year; $n = 49$). The numbers of positions defining large and small programs were selected to divide the group roughly in half, as there is no standard for this.

Differences with P values $< .05$ were considered significant. The χ^2 test was used to compare categorical variables (resident involvement, nonclinical time provision). A student's t test was used to compare quantitative variables (interviews per position offered and interviews per candidate).

RESULTS

In total, 118 responses were received, and 89 met the criteria for inclusion. There were 62 university-based programs and 27 non-university-based programs. This constituted 47.3% of the 188 accredited diagnostic radiology programs listed in FREIDA.

Among all responding programs, a mean of 12.6 (range, 3-28) applicants are interviewed per residency position (Figure 1). On average, university-based programs interview fewer candidates (mean, 11.5; range,

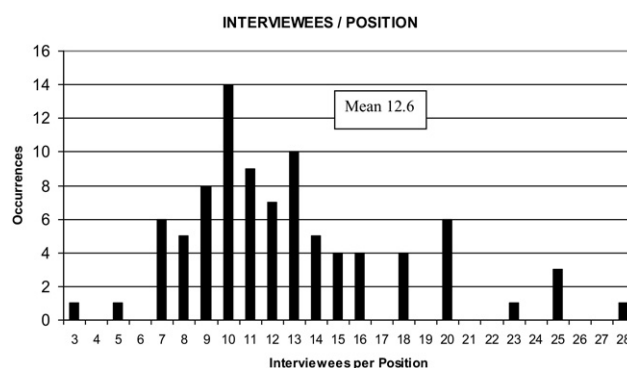


Fig 1. Applicants interviewed per residency position offered.

7-25) than non-university-based programs (mean, 15.3; range, 3-28) ($P < .05$; Figure 2). Of the 40 large programs, 35 (87.5%) were university based. Large programs interview fewer candidates per position (mean, 9.9; range, 3-20) than smaller programs (mean, 14.8; range, 5-28) ($P < .05$; Figure 3).

Candidates are interviewed by faculty members or residents a mean of 3.9 (range, 1-8) times at each site (Figure 4). Candidates are interviewed by a mean of 4.0 (range, 2-7) individuals at university-based programs and a mean of 3.5 (range, 1-8) individuals at non-university-based programs ($P = .13$).

Overall, 69.7% of the responding programs involve residents in the formal interview process. There is no significant difference in resident involvement between university-based (71.0%) and non-university-based (66.7%) programs ($P = .68$).

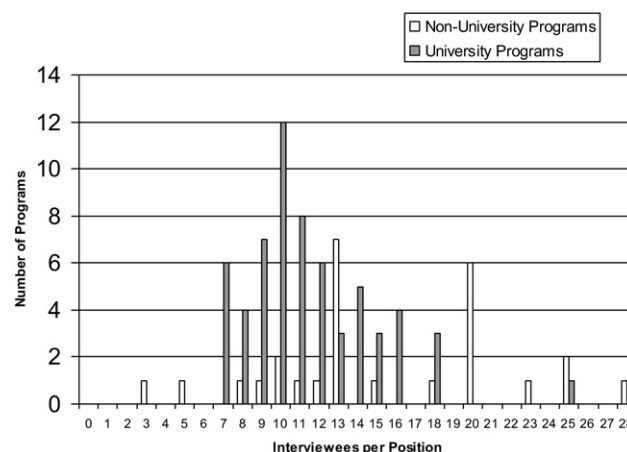


Fig 2. Comparison of interviews per position offered by university-based and non-university-based programs. University-based (mean, 11.5; range, 7-25) and non-university-based (mean, 15.3; range, 3-28) programs interview significantly different numbers of applicants per residency position offered ($P < .05$).

Table 1. Questions included in the interview process survey

1. How many applicants are interviewed per residency position offered?
2. How many interviews are given to each applicant on the interview day?
3. Are interviews performed by staff, residents, or both (how many by each)?
4. Are interviewers provided clinical coverage while interviewing applicants?

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