

# How Useful are Orthopedic Surgery Residency Web Pages? ☆

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**OBJECTIVE:** Medical students interested in orthopedic surgery residency positions frequently use the Internet as a modality to gather information about individual residency programs. Students often invest a painstaking amount of time and effort in determining programs that they are interested in, and the Internet is central to this process. Numerous studies have concluded that program websites are a valuable resource for residency and fellowship applicants. The purpose of the present study was to provide an update on the web pages of academic orthopedic surgery departments in the United States and to rate their utility in providing information on quality of education, faculty and resident information, environment, and applicant information.

**DESIGN:** We reviewed existing websites for the 156 departments or divisions of orthopedic surgery that are currently accredited for resident education by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Each website was assessed for quality of information regarding quality of education, faculty and resident information, environment, and applicant information.

**RESULTS:** We noted that 152 of the 156 departments (97%) had functioning websites that could be accessed. There was high variability regarding the comprehensiveness of orthopedic residency websites. Most of the orthopedic websites provided information on conference, didactics, and resident rotations. Less than 50% of programs provided information on resident call schedules, resident or faculty research and publications, resident hometowns, or resident salary.

**CONCLUSIONS:** There is a lack of consistency regarding the content presented on orthopedic residency websites. As the competition for orthopedic websites continues to increase, applicants flock to the Internet to learn more about orthopedic websites in greater number. A well-constructed

website has the potential to increase the caliber of students applying to a said program. (J Surg 72:1185-1189. © 2015 Association of Program Directors in Surgery. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.)

**KEY WORDS:** orthopedic residency, web page, national residency match program, recruitment, residents, graduate medical education

**COMPETENCIES:** Professionalism, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, Medical Knowledge

## INTRODUCTION

As early as the mid-1990s, medical residency programs began to realize the utility and power of the Internet as a tool for education, marketing, and recruitment of potential applicants.<sup>1,2</sup> Multiple specialties have examined the importance of program websites.<sup>3-8</sup> In 2001, Rozental et al.<sup>3</sup> examined the efficacy of the websites for the 154 accredited orthopedic surgery residency programs and found that less than 75% of the orthopedic departments maintained websites. Since then, both the Internet proficiency and user proficiency have grown exponentially, having overcome many technological and accessibility limitations. Although the Internet continues to increase its footprint within the health care landscape, there has not been a follow-up study to assess the evolution of orthopedic residency websites.

Current Internet connection speeds in the United States average 10 Mbps, more than a 100-fold increase over the 56-kbps modem speeds of 2000.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, websites of today can be filled with more dynamic content than ever before. The Internet is used extensively by the current generation of applicants, with 88.1% of people aged 25-34 years using the Internet in the United States according to recent census data.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Deloney et al.<sup>6</sup> showed that all the resident applicants surveyed in 2013 were comfortable browsing the Internet, compared with 11% of those surveyed in 2005. Numerous studies have concluded that program websites are a valuable resource for residency and fellowship applicants.<sup>4,5,11,12</sup> These websites not only

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function as a source of information about a program but also influence application decisions.<sup>4,11,13</sup>

Medical students interested in orthopedic surgery residency positions frequently use the Internet as a modality to gather information about individual residency programs. Although medical students apply through the National Residency Match Program, many also choose to schedule away rotations through the Visiting Student Application Service. Students invest a significant amount of time and effort in determining programs of interest, and the Internet is integral in this process. Outside personal experience or directly knowing someone with personal experience of a program, the Internet is the most effective means for applicants to learn about the various orthopedic residency programs.<sup>14</sup> Given a new-generation of discerning Internet users, the purpose of the present study is to provide an update on the web pages of academic orthopedic surgery departments in the United States and to rate their utility in providing information on quality of education, faculty and resident information, environment, and applicant information.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

The current study did not require formal review by the institutional review board, as all information gathered and used in this study is known to be public domain. The current study identified 156 accredited orthopedic surgery residency programs using FREIDA Online (Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database).

FREIDA Online is an annually updated database maintained by the American Medical Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges via the National GME (Graduate Medical Education) Census that catalogs information and statistics on more than 9500 graduate medical education programs accredited by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education. Training programs can be identified by specialty, state, keywords, or training institution.<sup>15</sup>

### Website Evaluation Criteria

Each program's website was accessed and evaluated according to criteria under the following categories: education, resident and faculty information, environment, and recruitment. These criteria were determined after reviewing factors that have been established as important to applicants.<sup>5,11,13</sup>

### Education

We evaluated each website for the availability of information on journal clubs, grand rounds, conferences, description of didactics, elective opportunities, and research opportunities. To receive credit in the aforementioned categories, programs must acknowledge the presence and frequency of these activities. It is not necessary for programs to provide a monthly schedule of events.

Additionally, we searched for information regarding rotation and call schedules.

### Resident and Faculty Information

For each website, we recorded the presence of current resident listings with information such as photograph, education background, hometown, and personal research. We also looked for information pertaining to alumni of each program. Additionally, we noted listings of current faculty including their photographs, specialties, training backgrounds, research, publications, and awards.

### Environment

The current study also searched for information on the general environment of each program, including the neighborhood in which the institution resides, local attractions, as well as social activities for residents.

### Recruitment

The criteria evaluated in this section included information for applicants, interview information, and away-rotation information. This section also included information pertaining to resident salary and benefits. It was not necessary for programs to describe the intricacies of their compensation package; we considered a functioning link to the GME office as proof for successfully meeting the criteria.

## RESULTS

Using the FREIDA Online database, the current study found 156 accredited orthopedic surgery residency programs. Of those programs, 97.4% (152) were found to have dedicated orthopedic residency websites and comprised the sample analyzed in this study. The remaining 4 programs (2.6%) did not have functioning websites at the time of our query, and of those 4 programs, 3 are military-affiliated residency programs.

Within the section composed of education-related criteria (Table 1), 65.1% of program websites (99) presented information on journal clubs, 73% (111) on grand rounds, 81.6% (124) on conference schedules, 83.6% (127) on didactics, 82.9% (126) on elective opportunities, and

**TABLE 1.** Educational Criteria

Journal club	65% (99/152)
Grand rounds	73% (111/152)
Conference	82% (124/152)
Didactics	84% (127/152)
Electives	83% (126/152)
Research opportunities	88% (133/152)
Rotations	91% (139/152)
Call schedule	48% (73/152)

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