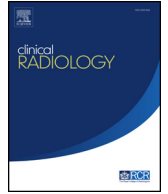


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Awareness, knowledge, and interest in interventional radiology among final year medical students in England

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AIM: To investigate awareness, knowledge, and interests in interventional radiology (IR) among final year students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Three hundred and fifty-nine anonymous questionnaires were distributed to final year medical students at two medical institutions in England. A total of 220 students (61%) responded.

RESULTS: In the present study, 167 students (75.9%) correctly identified that interventional radiologists perform angioplasty and stenting of arteries. One hundred and twenty students (54.5%) thought cardiac procedures are done by IR. Sixty-nine students (31.4%) knew IR procedures included treatment of tumours. Some of them were aware of other minor IR procedures such as insertion of drainage tubes (57.7%) and central lines (69.1%). The majority of students felt that their knowledge of IR compared to other specialities was poor (55.5%). Most students (81.4%) had not received any formal teaching on IR during medical school. Lack of interest and knowledge were commonly cited as deterrents by students who were against (47.7%) or unsure (37.3%) about pursuing a career in radiology. Nonetheless, 70% of students expressed that they wanted more exposure during medical school.

CONCLUSION: Students express a lack of knowledge and insufficient exposure to IR on the undergraduate curriculum. This has a direct impact on the speciality's chances of being considered as a career path. Implementing teaching in the undergraduate curriculum and increasing early student exposure to IR will encourage the speciality's growth.

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Introduction

Interventional radiology (IR) is one of the most rapidly expanding and pioneering specialities in modern

medicine.¹ There is now a shortage of interventional radiologists due to the essential role in many aspects of practice and increasing demand for IR procedures.¹ It is becoming increasingly recognised that early awareness and exposure of this speciality to medical students is vital for recruitment.^{2–5} Traditionally, medical students receive little exposure to the field of IR during their training and, to the authors' knowledge, there is a lack of formal IR teaching in the undergraduate curriculum. A recent study has shown

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that exposure of medical students to radiology during medical school increases knowledge and interests in pursuing radiology as a future career.² Medical students' knowledge, perception, and interest in IR has been assessed in various countries including the Republic of Ireland, USA, and Canada, but currently not in the UK.^{2–5} The aim of the present study was to investigate awareness and knowledge of IR among final year medical students at two medical schools in England.

Materials and methods

A total of 359 questionnaires were distributed to final year medical students during lectures and teaching sessions at two medical schools in England. Data were gathered over a 2-month period. The survey consisted of 13 questions with tick box answers. Questions were divided into several categories including assessment of exposure to IR, knowledge of IR procedures, training pathway, clinical practice, teaching during medical school, medical electives, and future interest in perusing IR as a career (Electronic [Supplementary Material Appendix S1](#)). Students were made aware that the survey was anonymous and any answers would not influence current or future assessments.

Results

There were a total of 220 (61.2%) respondents, with all questionnaires fully completed. Two hundred students (90.9%) felt that they knew what IR is. Over half of the respondents (58.6%) first heard of IR during a clinical attachment in a hospital whilst others during a lecture in medical school (20.5%) and from general reading (11.8%). Only six students (2.7%) reported that they had never heard of IR (Fig 1). Of the 220 respondents, only 95 students (43.2%) reported having any past interactions with an

interventional radiologist. Most students felt that their knowledge of IR compared to other specialities was poor (55.5%) or adequate (32.3%). Only four students (1.8%) felt their knowledge was excellent (Fig 2).

When presented with a range of procedures, some of which are performed by interventional radiologists, the majority of students correctly identified that interventional radiologists interpreted radiographs (57.7%), inserted drainage tubes (57.7%), inserted lines such as Hickman lines (69.1%), performed vessel embolisation (77.7%) as well as angioplasty and stenting in peripheral vascular disease (75.9%). Only 31.4% of students also correctly identified IR procedures included the treatment of tumours. Additionally, 29.5% and 54.5% of students incorrectly identified that interventional radiologists performed arterial bypasses and cardiac angioplasty, respectively (Fig 3).

In terms of clinical practice for interventional radiologists, 62.7% of students indicated that interventional radiologists could admit patients to hospital (Fig 4), 35.9% indicated that they performed ward rounds (Fig 5), and 54.5% had outpatient clinics (Fig 6). The radiology training pathway was correctly identified by 55.9% of students although 34.5% thought it was via both core surgical training (CST) and radiology (Fig 7).

In regards to teaching and exposure at medical school, an overwhelming majority of students (81%) stated that they had not received any lectures on IR. Students answered that they would want teaching and exposure in the form of integrated lectures, tutorials, and clinical attachments (Table 1). The majority of students (55.5%) reported they would wish to complete an attachment or an elective in IR if given the opportunity. Only 15% of students felt that they would consider a career in IR, with the majority stating they would not (47.7%) or they were not sure (37.3%). The most common reason for not wanting to pursue a career in IR was "lack of interest". Only a small minority of students felt that the risks of radiation (4.5%) or lifestyle (3.8%) were factors that discouraged them from a career in IR (Fig 8).

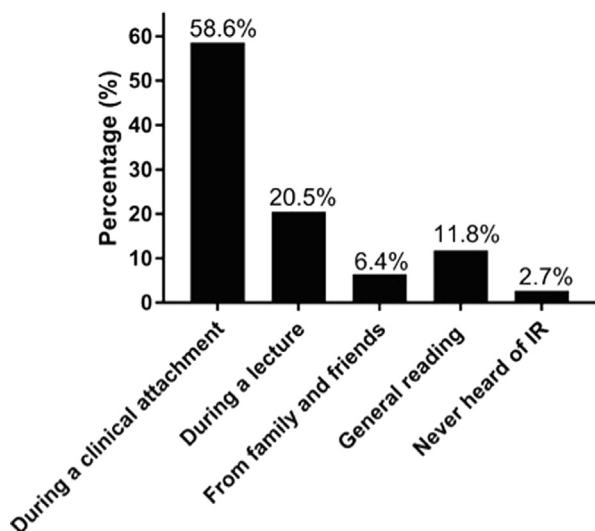


Figure 1 Students' response to where they first heard of or encountered IR.

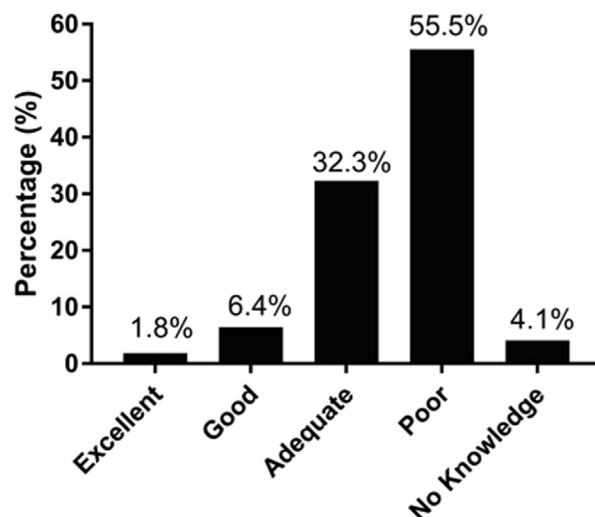


Figure 2 Students' knowledge of IR compared to other specialities.

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