

Boot Camps

Preparing for Residency



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KEYWORDS

• Otolaryngology • Boot camp • Simulation • Education

KEY POINTS

- Simulation-based boot camps are intensive events in which residents actively practice their psychomotor, cognitive, and affective skills.
- Course content and structure are based on participant needs and adult learning principles that emphasize hands-on learning, directed practice, and debriefing.
- Boot camp implementation requires considerable support and resources.
- Regionalization of boot camps may alleviate infrastructure limitations.
- Outcomes studies confirm improvement of self-perceived knowledge, skills, and behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

During the course of medical school, students are trained as relatively undifferentiated general physicians with a broad understanding of medicine. Electives and subinternships hone a student's interests, knowledge, and skills in a particular specialty, but ultimately, the transition from clerkship to residency can be abrupt and stressful. The dramatic increase in direct patient care and clinical responsibility may exacerbate this anxiety, especially in students who feel ill-equipped or lack self-confidence in their abilities.¹ Although all graduating medical students pass standardized examinations before becoming resident physicians, there is undoubtedly some variability in the fund of knowledge and skills among graduating medical students.

The cumulative effect of these factors, along with the sudden changeover of experienced house staff replaced with new trainees, has been shown to adversely affect patient care and outcomes. Studies have demonstrated a clear spike in errors

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associated with increased mortality when new physicians take on clinical responsibilities in July.^{2,3} Proposed solutions center on the premise that not all trainees at a given level possess the same skills. The most compelling approach is the introduction of focused training to balance the disparities, preferably before the new role is assumed.

Simulation-based education, and introductory boot camps, in particular, may serve as the optimum bridge between medical school and residency, equipping novice residents with the necessary foundational knowledge, procedural, and communication skills before undertaking clinical responsibilities relevant for their specialty. This article aims to provide an overview of otolaryngology boot camps and the current evidence supporting simulation boot camps in residency training.

BOOT CAMP CONCEPT

Boot camps in medical education are loosely based on military boot camps: the premise of both are similar in that the emphasis is to provide basic training for a relatively undifferentiated new recruit with the opportunity to acquire and practice the requisite skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

Other high-stakes industries face similar challenges in training their novices. In the aviation sector, for example, pilots devote a significant portion of their training to simulations that prepare them for time-sensitive, critical, and crisis-averting decisions.⁴ Simulations maximize their experience so when faced with similarly critical real-life situations, they draw from their simulation training. Similarly, offering simulation-based medical education early in otolaryngology training allows novice residents the opportunity to practice diagnostic, management, and technical skills before meeting these challenges in real-life situations.

In recent years, with the increasing emphasis on patient safety and improved outcomes, there is growing sentiment that the traditional model of resident education needs further refinement.⁵ Moreover, surgical residency programs are required to enforce duty-hour restriction, possibly limiting the trainee's exposure to rare but critical and life-threatening situations.⁴ As a result, the traditional teaching mantra of "see one, do one, teach one" with real-life patients is being challenged. Simulation-based medical education and boot camps provide trainees with structured learning in an intensive and immersive environment allowing deliberate practice of skills and behaviors in the management of real-life scenarios. Other benefits include a distraction-free and nonthreatening environment in which learners receive immediate feedback. All this can be achieved while minimizing patient risk and discomfort.⁶⁻¹⁰ These interactive experiences can entail standardized patients, virtual reality simulators, task trainers, and human patient simulation.

Many specialties, including general surgery, vascular surgery, emergency medicine, and anesthesia use boot camps to transition trainees into their new role as residents.² In the United States, the Society of Neurological Surgeons hosts standardized and mandatory regional boot camps for all PGY-1 (postgraduate year) neurosurgery residents across the country.^{11,12} Similarly, otolaryngology boot camps can be designed to introduce important principles of otolaryngology care to novice residents, including hands-on practice with a variety of exercises to develop the cognitive, communication, and procedural skills necessary for an otolaryngology residency.

INTENDED LEARNERS

Novice residents are expected to possess baseline skills at the onset of residency, largely because they are the first responders to most otolaryngology calls and consults. However, the reality remains that most new residents have limited exposure

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