

Showcasing Our Profession to the Future Physician Workforce: Medical Student Radiology Expo

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Rationale and Objectives: There has been waxing and waning of popularity of radiology as a career choice over the last few years. These fluctuations may in part be due to misconceptions such as the perceived lack of patient contact, as well as the perception of decreasing numbers of entry-level jobs. To address such misconceptions, it is important to reach medical students early in their training, both to give them a comprehensive and balanced understanding of radiology practice, and to appropriately frame radiologists as clinicians. Realizing the benefits of direct student outreach, a number of medical specialties are moving toward more direct recruitment efforts often through student interest groups and career fairs. The Medical Student Radiology Expo (MSRE) was proposed and executed by the Alliance of Medical Students Educators in Radiology, which was supported by the Association of University Radiologists (AUR) and the American College of Radiology. The MSRE was held immediately after the 2016 AUR annual meeting and hosted at the Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego. The goals of the MSRE were threefold: (1) to showcase radiology as a distinct and exciting specialty to all medical students, (2) to foster an interest in pursuing a career in radiology among medical students, and (3) to create a distributable and customizable combined symposium and workshop that could be easily replicated elsewhere.

Methods: The activities of this 1-day expo started with a morning of didactic elements, including a session identifying inaccurate myths surrounding radiology, specific details of interest pertaining to diagnostic radiology and interventional radiology residency programs, followed by interactive imaging diagnosis games, and question and answer sessions. A casual lunch with faculty members and attendees provided for more sustained direct and informal interactions between the students and the faculty. During the afternoon sessions, students participated in hands-on workshops, including ultrasound, imaging-guided biopsies, catheter manipulation, and post-processing image analysis, as well as roundtable discussions about radiology with the faculty.

Results: The results from the post-program survey of the medical students were overall positive.

Conclusions: The MSRE, with the combined efforts of multiple organizations, was successful. A customizable, modular toolkit has been posted on the AUR website. Using this toolkit as a template, this recruitment and informational activity can be replicated at individual institutions, local radiology chapters, multidisciplinary meetings, and radiology meetings.

Key Words: Radiology; residency; education; medical student; recruitment; interest group; curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been waxing and waning interest in radiology as a career choice among US medical students in a cyclical manner. There was a sharp decline in interest from 2009 to 2013 (1), with an uptick in the last 2 years (2–4). These fluctuations may be driven in part by misperceptions regarding a long-term slowdown in the job market (5–8). With the notion that many radiologists have little patient contact and the less visible role of radiologists on the patient care team, there may also be a misperception that radiologists are not valued or seen as integral members of the patient care teams. According to a recent survey of fourth-year medical students, one of the top reasons

students gave for choosing a career other than radiology was the perceived lack of patient interaction (9).

Reaching medical students early in their training is essential to reinforce the fact that radiologists have direct patient contact and play critical roles in patient care teams (10). To convey the message to the entire future physician workforce, effective outreach efforts addressing the misperception of radiology and radiologists should broadly target all medical students rather than just those who express an early interest in radiology. It is also essential to capitalize on methods and approaches outside of the existing standard medical school curriculum, such as mentoring by radiologists, participation of medical students in radiology research, radiology student interest group activities, and institutional student fairs (9). Realizing the benefits of active outreach, a number of other medical specialties have already moved toward more direct recruitment efforts, often through student interest groups and career fairs (11–15).

The Medical Student Radiology Expo (MSRE) was proposed and executed by the Alliance of Medical Students Educators in Radiology (AMSER), and was financially and organizationally supported by the Association of University Radiologists (AUR) and the American College of Radiology (ACR). The expo was held in conjunction with the 2016 AUR annual meeting hosted by the Department of Radiology at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

The goals of the MSRE were threefold: (1) to showcase radiology as a distinct and exciting specialty among all medical students, (2) to foster an interest in pursuing a career in radiology among medical students, and (3) to create a distributable and customizable combined symposium and workshop that could be easily replicated elsewhere.

The purpose of this report is both to describe the structure and the process of the MSRE—planning, logistics, execution, and post-event evaluation—and to provide a brief summary of “lessons learned” from the MSRE.

METHODS

AMSER is the primary advocacy group for radiologists dedicated to educating and advising medical students. Inspired by the example set by the Society of Interventional Radiology educational efforts directed at medical students, the members of AMSER sought to create a shareable template for medical student outreach (13,14). AMSER, with the Alliance of Clinical Educators in Radiology, applied for and received the inaugural Venture Capital Fund Grant from the AUR. Additional support was given by the ACR, as the products of this activity would benefit the entire radiology community by increasing interest in radiology.

The project consisted of designing a replicable and customizable modular toolkit that would be used to construct a 1-day interactive symposium directed to medical students that would capture key concepts explaining and contextualizing a career in radiology. The components of the project include a manual, approximate costs, templates

for invitation letters, programs, flyers and posters, and resource cards, along with a proposed program layout. The costs can be minimal with volunteer faculty and residents and the use of university space. The module segments include videos, shareable lectures, and an outline for the workshops. These materials were designed to help guide not only those interested in holding expos at future regional or national meetings, but also those interested in hosting similar events at individual institutions.

Medical Student Radiology Expo (MSRE)

The MSRE was held 1 day after the annual AUR meeting in San Diego in 2016. The date was selected to be convenient to the radiology educators and leaders who attended the AUR meeting; the weekend date was also chosen to attract the greatest number of regional medical students. The Department of Radiology at the UCSD graciously hosted the event at the UCSD campus. The physical setting included an auditorium; a lobby for registration, breakfast and refreshments, and an open patio for lunch; and a cluster of several small rooms within the radiology department, in close proximity for the hands-on interactive workshops on ultrasound (US), biopsies, catheters, and picture archiving and communication systems (PACS).

Advertisement, Preparation, and Registration

The targeted group was students from the regional medical schools in and around southern California, although the event was open to all interested medical students. Advertising and notification to medical schools in southern California and its vicinity took place through radiology student interest groups, and national outreach was performed through AUR e-mails to members. Although all students were welcome, first- through third-year medical students were targeted. Matched students were also recruited to serve as mentors for the more junior students. Registration and reminders were sent out through SurveyMonkey, which helped inform the students that space was limited. Knowing student information and interests, especially approximate numbers of attendees in advance, assisted with the planning. Most of the students hailed from six institutions in the southern California region, with a few from other institutions outside the immediate region. Student travel expenses were either provided by the students or their affiliated institutions.

Faculty volunteers were recruited through e-mails distributed to AUR members and to UCSD faculty and residents. The volunteers were diverse, including young and enthusiastic faculty members and a number of women, an important feature, as women may choose a career where they see women mentors (9). These volunteers were organized into small task force workgroups. Workgroup tasks included selecting promotional videos; organizing lectures, game shows, and workshops; creating e-brochures, surveys, and giveaways;

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