

An Assessment of Radiology Residency Program Websites

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Abstract

Purpose: When prospective radiology residents decide where to apply to residency, many will use the Internet as a resource to garner information. Therefore, it is important for residency programs to produce and maintain an informative and comprehensive website. Here, we review 179 radiology residency program websites for 19 criteria including various aspects related to the residency application process, benefits, didactics, research, clinical training, and faculty leadership.

Methods: We evaluated 179 radiology residency program websites for the inclusion of 19 different criteria. Criteria for information not available directly on the website and links with no information were considered not present.

Results: Only 12 of the 179 (6.7%) program websites had at least 80% of the 19 criteria. In addition, 41 programs (23%) had less than 50% of the criteria listed on their websites. Websites ranged from having 16% of the criteria to as much as 95%.

Conclusion: Although previous studies have shown that prospective radiology resident applicants are influenced by intangibles like current resident satisfaction and academic reputation, they have also shown that applicants are influenced by the educational curriculum, clinical training, program resources, research opportunities, and quality of faculty. Therefore, it is imperative to provide online resources for prospective candidates in an attempt for residency programs to remain competitive in recruiting high-quality US medical student graduates. These findings suggest there is room for improving the comprehensiveness of information provided on radiology residency program websites.

Key Words: Radiology residency, website, applicant, ERAS, NRMP, medical student

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INTRODUCTION

Medical students interested in obtaining a residency position in radiology register on the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) and submit their application to a list of designated programs, potentially undergo interviews, and then list their preferred order of residency programs to the National Residency Matching Program. Although medical students rely on advice from colleagues and mentors when deciding which programs to apply to,

many students will review information offered on the individual radiology program's website. In fact, a study of anesthesia residency applicants found that 98% of applicants referenced residency program websites during the application process [1]. Given the widespread availability of the Internet, it is not surprising that prospective radiology applicants frequently use the program's website to garner more information in an effort to better educate themselves about program details like curriculum and research opportunities.

Previous studies in other medical specialties have demonstrated deficiencies in online content available on residency program websites [2-7]. An overview of general surgery residency websites in 2004 established a basic set of 10 design criteria and 16 content items [2], followed by a study in which the authors sent out anonymous surveys to establish information needs and thoughts on current websites [1]. This research has demonstrated that residency program websites are often not

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comprehensive and that the missing information can be crucial for applicants in finding the right fit among the programs offered [3,4]. A study evaluating emergency medicine residency websites found that residency applicants valued the content of the website more than the design aspects [5]. Because program websites are often the most convenient or only resource prospective residents have in deciding whether or not to apply to the program, and because the content of a website has been demonstrated to be important to applicants [8], the completeness of the website is critical for programs to remain competitive for applicants, particularly with a decline since 2009 in applications to radiology resident programs [6,7,9]. Previously, it was shown that radiology applicants find great value in the information available online in assisting them through the match process [10]. To date, there has been no study evaluating the completeness of radiology residency websites. We reviewed the websites of 179 radiology residency programs and evaluated each website on information offered, including the application process, didactics, benefits, research, clinical training, and faculty leadership. Thorough evaluation of the criteria described here will allow radiology residency programs to reevaluate their websites and ensure that they are providing comprehensive information to applicants.

METHODS

A list of 180 diagnostic radiology residency programs and websites was obtained from the ERAS in March 2016. Of the 180 programs, 179 were evaluated (one program's website was inaccessible). All websites were freely available to the public including any potential applicant. The website for each program was then accessed at the link provided by ERAS or through a Google search. The websites were then searched for the presence of 19 unique criteria (Table 1). Inclusion of information required its presence directly on the radiology residency or department website. However, information on salary, benefits, parking, meals, and faculty listing was considered present if it was accessible by a direct link from the radiology website. This information was collected by one of the authors (J.B.) and verified by a second author (D.R.H.).

Analysis of programs based on geographic location and size were also performed. Programs were divided into institutions based in the Northeast (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, and the District of Columbia), South (Virginia,

Table 1. List of 19 features and the percentage of total programs that included the feature on their website

Features	% of Programs That Included Feature
Facility description	89
Contact e-mail	88
Academic courses (such as AIRP or physics)	83
Current residents	78
Benefits	69
Information on surrounding area	66
Past research projects	65
Comprehensive faculty listing	63
Rotation schedule	62
Call schedule	61
Research description	59
Link to ERAS	57
Fellowship placement	55
Salary	51
Message from program director	46
Message from chairperson	42
Meal allowance	40
Selection criteria	37
Parking	36

AIRP=American Institute for Radiologic Pathology; ERAS=Electronic Residency Application Service.

Kentucky, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Puerto Rico), West (New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, California, Hawaii), and Midwest (Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia). States without programs included Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The Northeast contained 70 programs, the South contained 43 programs, the West contained 25 programs, and the Midwest contained 41 programs. For analysis based on program size, the median number of residents (not including interns) was 24, so programs with 24 residents or more were considered a large program, and programs with fewer than 24 were considered small programs. By these criteria, there were 90 large programs and 86 small programs. Three programs did not have information on the number of residents in the program.

RESULTS

Of the 179 radiology residency program websites evaluated, only 12 (6.7%) addressed at least 80% of the 19

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