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Comparison of Self-Reported Data on Student Doctor Network to Objective Data of the National Resident Matching Program

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Abstract

Purpose: To compare matching outcomes between self-reporting on Student Doctor Network (SDN) and objective data from the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP).

Materials and Methods: Data were collected from SDN starting in the 2010 to 2011 academic year and extending to the 2015 to 2016 academic year. A total of 193 radiation oncology applicants had reported data during the period. A total of four applicants (2.1%) did not match and were excluded from the analysis. Applicants were compared with the NRMP charting outcomes of 2011, 2014, and 2016.

Results: US allopathic seniors comprised a majority of those reporting on SDN (95.2%). The majority of applicants (58.2%) self-reported in the later years between 2014 and 2016. Those reporting on SDN were more likely to be members of Alpha Omega Alpha (39.7% on SDN versus 27.5% in 2016 NRMP, 23.6% in 2014 NRMP, and 31.2% in 2011 NRMP) and had higher mean United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) step 1 and step 2 scores. Of the applicants, 81% matched within their top three ranked residencies on their match list. Common themes associated with reasons for their successful match included research experience, letters of recommendation, and away rotations. Common themes associated with advice given to future applicants were the importance of research, personality, and away rotations.

Conclusion: Self-reporting on SDN does have a bias toward more successful radiation oncology applicants compared with the objective NRMP data. However, if self-reporting increases, SDN may serve as a reasonably accurate source of information for future applicants.

Key Words: Matching, radiation oncology, Student Doctor Network, National Resident Matching Program

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INTRODUCTION

Limited objective information is available for medical students who are interested in matching into radiation oncology (RO) residency [1]. Much of the data are collected by the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) and released every few years as part of the charting outcome publication [2-4]. However, due to the inconsistent nature of these publications, medical students use different resources to review competition and discuss optimal interview and matching strategies. One such resource is Student Doctor Network (SDN). SDN offers a forum in which medical students can discuss their experiences and report information. SDN has multiple years of data and developed a formal process of reporting in 2010. With self-reporting, there are concerns for validity of the data and reporting bias favoring more competitive applicants.

This study compares NRMP and SDN data to determine if self-reporting had similar outcomes to the NRMP reports.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a review of the self-reported data of SDN (http://forums.studentdoctor.net/forums/radiation-oncology.50/).

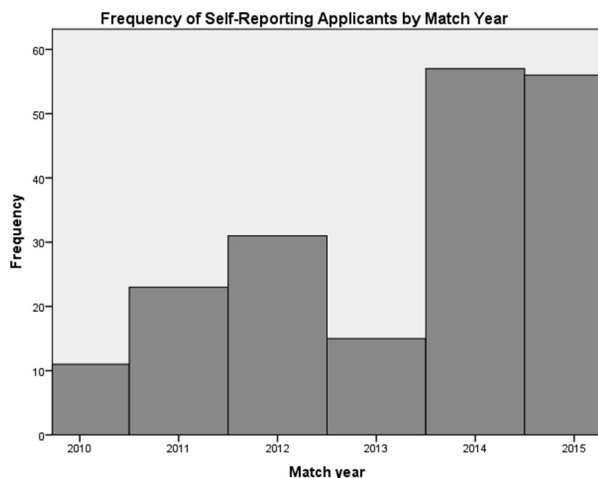Frequency of Self-Reporting Applicants by Match Year

Fig 1. Frequency of self-reporting applicants by match year on Student Doctor Network.

This study was considered exempt following Institutional Review Board review. Reporters either used the forum posting system (2010-2014) or used a yearly Google document (2014-2016) to report applicant data after match day. Any reporter who had any data was included in this analysis. There were 193 applicants between 2010 and 2016 who had reported some data on the SDN website. The major categories reported on SDN include board scores, Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA), class rank, reputation of medical school, research, honors in clerkship, number and location of away rotations, number of programs applied to, number of interview invitations, number matched on rank list and where, in addition to anything that may have helped. This is a self-reporting website, so data were missing based on personal preferences and changes in format. Four of the applicants (2.1%) did not match and were excluded from this analysis. For comparison, data were obtained from the Charting Outcomes 2011, 2014, and 2016 [2-4]. Additional statistical data such as standard deviation and other evaluation points could not be obtained from the NRMP secondary to data restrictions set by the NRMP. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 24 (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

RESULTS

There were 189 applicants who self-reported and matched successfully into RO residency between 2010 and 2016. The majority of these applicants were US allopathic seniors (95.2%), and US osteopathic graduates (1.6%), US allopathic graduates (0.5%), and unknown application type (2.6%) made up the rest of

Table 1. Summary of information on Student Doctor Network between 2010 and 2016

Applicants	Value
Mean number of contiguous ranks (±SD)	12 ± 4
Mean USMLE step 1 score (±SD)	248 ± 14
Mean USMLE step 2 score (±SD)	254 ± 13
Mean number of abstracts, presentations, and publications (±SD)	9 ± 8
AOA, n (%)	
Yes	75 (39.7%)
No	103 (54.5%)
Unknown	11 (5.8%)
PhD, n (%)	
Yes	39 (20.6%)
No	147 (77.8%)
Unknown	3 (1.6%)
Research year, n (%)	
Yes	23 (12.2%)
No	163 (86.2%)
Unknown	3 (1.6%)
Couples matched, n (%)	
Yes	10 (5.3%)
No	176 (93.1%)
Unknown	3 (1.6%)
Step 2 available to programs, n (%)	
Yes	88 (46.6%)
No	76 (40.2%)
Unknown	25 (13.2%)
Class quartile rank, n (%)	
1	107 (56.6%)
2	22 (11.6%)
3	10 (5.3%)
4	3 (1.6%)
Unknown	47 (24.9%)
Any research, n (%)	
Yes	180 (95.2%)
No	4 (2.1%)
Unknown	5 (2.6%)
Mean number of applications submitted (±SD)	59 ± 19
Mean number of interview received (±SD)	16 ± 8
Mean number of interview attended (±SD)	13 ± 4
Matched on rank list, n (%)	
1	69 (36.5%)
2	34 (18.0%)
3	18 (9.5%)
4	11 (5.8%)
5	6 (3.2%)
6	8 (4.2%)
8	2 (1.1%)
9	1 (0.5%)
12	1 (0.5%)
Unknown	39 (20.6%)

AOA = Alpha Omega Alpha; USMLE = United States Medical Licensing Examination.

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