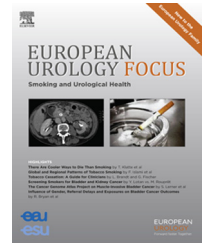


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Education

Urology Residency Training in Italy: Results of the First National Survey

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Abstract

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Background: Numerous surveys have been performed to determine the competence and the confidence of residents. However, there is no data available on the condition of Italian residents in urology.

Objective: To investigate the status of training among Italian residents in urology regarding scientific activity and surgical exposure.

Design, setting, and participants: A web-based survey that included 445 residents from all of the 25 Italian Residency Programmes was conducted between September 2015 and November 2015.

Outcome measurements and statistical analysis: The main outcomes were represented by scientific activity, involvement in surgical procedures, and overall satisfaction.

Results and limitations: In total, 324 out of 445 (72.8%) residents completed the survey. Overall, 104 (32%) residents had not published any scientific manuscripts, 148 (46%) published ≤ 5 , 38 (12%) ≤ 10 , 26 (8%) ≤ 15 , four (1%) ≤ 20 , and four (1%) > 20 manuscripts, respectively. We did not observe any differences when residents were stratified by sex ($p = 0.5$). Stent positioning (45.7%), extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (30.9%),

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transurethral resection of bladder tumor (33.0%), hydrocelectomy (24.7%), varicocelectomy (17%), ureterolithotripsy (14.5%), and orchiectomy (12.3%) were the surgical procedures more frequently performed by residents. Overall, 272 residents (84%) expressed a *good* satisfaction for urology specialty, while 178 (54.9%) expressed a *good* satisfaction for their own residency programme. We observed a statistically decreased trend for *good* satisfaction for urology specialty according to the postgraduate year ($p = 0.02$).

Conclusions: Italian Urology Residency Programmes feature some heavy limitations regarding scientific activity and surgical exposure. Nonetheless, satisfaction rate for urology specialty remains high. Further improvements in Residency Programmes should be made in order to align our schools to others that are actually more challenging.

Patient summary: In this web-based survey, Italian residents in urology showed limited scientific productivity and low involvement in surgical procedures. Satisfaction for urology specialty remains high, demonstrating continuous interest in this field of study from residents.

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1. Introduction

Urology is one of the most competitive Residency Programmes in Italy. The Italian Ministry of Education gives all university departments a minimum training programme that needs to be accomplished in order to be appointed as a urologist. The programme is structured so that all the Residency Programmes can fulfil all the criteria established by the Italian Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, there are an insufficient number of reports regarding training in urology. Nonetheless, such an analysis might be useful to identify better Residency Programmes and possible areas of improvement, raising the standard of medical education, and eventually, patient outcomes.

Numerous surveys have been performed to determine the competence and the confidence of residents [1–3]. However, this is, to our knowledge, the first survey analysing all aspects of Urology Residency Programmes in a large European Country. Nowadays, most of the available papers about surgical training come from the USA and are focused on General Surgery Residency Programmes. In this context, recent studies have shown that 38% of general surgery residents are not confident in their ability to be able to practice independently upon completion of the standard 5-yr residency programme [4]. Moreover, scientific research is considered by many to be an important component of residency training. However, few studies have focused on the exposure to scientific activity during residency. In light of this, we aimed to investigate the status of training among Italian residents in urology regarding scientific activity, and surgical training, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Italian Residency Programmes.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Study design

Delegates of the Italian Residents Committee (Senato degli Specializzandi) and the Italian Society of Urology designed a 32-item online survey using the platform www.surveymonkey.com (Survey Monkey, Portland, OR, USA).

The survey was conducted in Italian according to the Checklist for Reporting Results of Internet E-Surveys [5]. The questions were selected

by the delegates of the Senato degli Specializzandi and covered the main aspects of urology residency. Some Italian urology opinion leaders reviewed the quality of the survey for expert opinion. Before administering the survey, we tested it for usability and technical functionality. The survey was distributed in November 2015, and the survey collector was operational during the period from November 2015 to December 2015. All Italian residents represented the cohort, and the entire cohort was contacted by the Senato degli Specializzandi via the national email database of the Residents Committee. All the Residents were asked to fill out a brief anonymous online questionnaire through the specialised website SurveyMonkey.com.

We received a high response rate thanks to weekly email reminders and the coordination of the resident local delegate within the Senate. The email was sent to each resident with a signed return receipt.

Weekly reminders were sent both via email and via the local Senate representative to increase the response rate. To each respondent, general questions such as age, sex, year of training, and school of training were asked. In addition, several aspects of their training were explored, such as involvement in diagnostic and operative urology, scientific activity, publications, rotation in other centres, and fellowships.

The 32-question survey contained questions pertaining to all items about urology residency (Supplementary Table 1). The questionnaire was sent out to 25 Schools of Urology (Table 1). In an attempt to increase the response rate reminders were sent to all the participants.

2.2. Statistical analyses

The qualitative data was tested using the chi-square test or Fisher's exact test where appropriate, while the continuous variables, presented as mean (\pm standard deviation), were tested using Mann-Whitney U-Test or Student *t* test according to their distribution (according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test). For all statistical comparisons, significance was considered as $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1. Baseline characteristics

In total, 324 out of all the 445 (72.8%) Italian residents completed the survey. Overall, 101 (31.2%), 28 (8.6%), 66 (20.4%), 66 (20.4%), and 63 (19.4%) were in postgraduate year (PGY) 1, PGY2, PGY3, PGY4, and PGY5, respectively. Two hundred and fifty (77.2%) and 74 (22.8%) were men and women, respectively. The survey also revealed that residents usually worked 50 h/wk in 25%, and more than 50 h in 52%.

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