Departmental Website Utilization by Anesthesiology Residency Candidates

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Learner Audience: Anesthesiology Program Directors & Administrators

Background: Residency programs have become largely dependent on departmental websites to convey program information to prospective residents. The use and utility of these sites have been explored in Emergency Medicine,[1,2] Medicine[3] and Surgery[4] programs. In an attempt to improve our own Departmental website we set out to determine applicant utilization and response to the site, along with exploring what specific content items candidates deem desirable.

Hypothesis: We hypothesized that residency candidates make significant use of departmental websites both in choosing programs to apply to and in obtaining information about programs to which they have submitted an application. In addition, we hypothesized that applicants would be interested in basic program information such as the profile of current residents but less interested in more specific details such as rotation schedules and specific rotation descriptions.

Method Designs: A cross-sectional survey was administered to all anesthesiology residency candidates interviewing at our institution over a two year period. The survey addressed the applicants use and opinions of our website, in addition to the role of website functionality in a resident's perception of a department. Finally, the survey explored what specific website content (videos, didactic schedules, rotation descriptions, research opportunities, information regarding current residents, etc.) applicants sought as they evaluated residency programs.

Outcome: When asked which features of a website were important in their evaluation of a residency training program applicants showed a strong bias toward desiring a great deal of specific information, with 68-88% indicating that they wanted stipend/benefit information, didactic schedules, information about the city, rotation schedules, lists of current faculty, lists of current residents (including medical school attended and contact information), individual rotation descriptions, and current accreditation information. On the other hand, only 19% felt that videos featuring current residents were useful, while 42% felt that a list of current department research projects should be included.

The results verify our hypothesis that the vast majority of residency applicants utilized our Departmental website to obtain program information. Interestingly, very few indicated that the site was a factor in their decision to apply to the program, in contradiction to results published by educators in other specialties.[1,3] Finally, unlike our hypothesis which stated that applicants seek only basic information, candidates clearly desire a great deal of information and detail as they utilize the Internet in the residency program selection process.

1. Gaeta TJ, et al: Aspects of residency programs' web sites important to student applicants. Acad Emerg Med 2005; 12(1):89-92.
2. Mahler SA, et al: Importance of residency program web sites to emergency medicine applicants. J Emerg Med 2009; 36(1): 83-88.
3. Embi PJ, et al: Use and utility of Web-based residency program information: a survey of residency applicants. J Med Internet Res 2003; 5(3):e22.
4. Reilly EF, et al: General surgery residency program websites: usefulness and usability for resident applicants. Curr Surg 2004;61(2):236-40.