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LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Anesthesiology Residency Program Social Media Presence: An Analysis

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TO THE EDITORS:

We would like to highlight our recent characterization of American anesthesiology residency program social media (SM) platforms. With the post-pandemic shift to virtual interviews and application seasons, the impact of SM on residency decisions made by applicants remains relevant and timely, especially as SM use has steadily increased.¹ Despite this, no recent studies have examined the SM presence of American anesthesiology programs on a national scale. It is salient to characterize the current landscape of SM accounts to establish a foundation for understanding the impact of SM on residency admissions, enabling programs to effectively use SM to recruit a class with the best fit in the current landscape.

DATA COLLECTION

Data on US residency program SM accounts were collected between September 30 and October 5, 2024. Official SM accounts of anesthesiology departments run by employed staff or faculty were not considered residency SM accounts, and only SM accounts run by residents were considered. Accounts were deemed “resident-run” if explicitly stated in the biography of the account or if the content featured primarily consisted of residents rather than overall department news. Accounts were first searched for on the official Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Residency Explorer Tool and then manually on each respective SM platform if not listed

and linked on the AAMC Tool.² Of note, it is not required for residency accounts to list their SM on the AAMC Residency Explorer Tool. SM explored included Instagram (Menlo Park, CA), X (previously “Twitter”) (San Francisco, CA), and TikTok (Culver City, CA).

CHARACTERIZATION OF ACCOUNTS

All US anesthesiology residency programs listed on the official AAMC Residency Explorer Tool were screened for SM accounts (n = 166). Five programs did not actively participate in the match and had no data on applications and residency class size; therefore, they were excluded from analysis.² One program had a private Instagram account.

Seventy-nine percent (n = 127) of 161 active US anesthesiology residency programs had a residency-associated SM account (Instagram or X). Of these 127, 98% (n = 124) had Instagram accounts and 36% (n = 46) had X accounts. Zero percent of US anesthesiology residency programs had official, resident-run TikTok accounts. Thirty-three percent (n = 42) of programs had one or both of their SM accounts listed and linked on the official AAMC Residency Explorer Tool.² The mean number of Instagram followers was 1469 and the mean number of Instagram posts was 172. The number of X followers was 987 and the mean number of X posts was 559.

Of the 98% (n = 124) of programs with SM that had Instagram accounts, 123 were analyzed for activity. The activity of one

program could not be analyzed because of the presence of a private account. Of the programs, 0.81% (n = 1) were active every day, 50.4% (n = 62) were active weekly, 28% (n = 35) were active monthly, and 20.3% (n = 25) were rarely active.

Of the 36% (n = 46) of programs with X accounts, 19.6% (n = 9) were active weekly, 10.8% (n = 5) were active monthly, and 69.6% (n = 32) were rarely active. No accounts were active every day.

All residency-associated SM accounts analyzed featured at least 2 categories of mixed content (categories included social events, research efforts, education initiatives, interpersonal relationships, or general communication) unless an account had a single post (n = 1).

TAKEAWAYS

Overall, this novel characterization reveals a high prevalence of SM usage among American anesthesiology residency programs, and minimal integration of SM accounts into official AAMC sites, suggesting low usage of SM as a formal recruitment tool. However, each social account had a mixed variety of content, which can work to effectively highlight to the diverse experiences of residents within the program. Further studies may find it helpful to build on the basis of this characterization to elucidate the role that SM plays in the application process.

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continued from previous page

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