SHORT COMMUNICATION

Radiology trainees in the UK and Ireland: academic background, publication rates and research plans

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ABSTRACT. To assess the level of achievement of current trainees, we investigated the academic qualifications, publication rates and future research plans of 240 radiology trainees in the UK and Ireland. All radiology trainees in the UK and Ireland were surveyed by a questionnaire enquiring about academic record and career ambitions. Our study shows that the level of academic achievement of radiology trainees is high, and provides interesting information concerning the current group of radiology trainees in these regions. It will be of interest both to radiology trainers and to doctors hoping to pursue a career in radiology. It also demonstrates that a potential recruitment crisis in academic radiology exists.

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To assess the level of achievement of current trainees, we investigated the academic qualifications, publication rates and future research plans of 240 radiology trainees in the UK and Ireland. Trainees interested in academia typically have experience of research, medical education or academic success. These factors were analysed in relation to radiology and the Walport report on future training of clinical academics.

Methods and materials

All radiology trainees in the UK and Ireland were surveyed using a web-based questionnaire, which was e-mailed to them directly. It enquired about their academic record (higher degrees, publications, presentations, success at postgraduate examinations and grant applications) and career aspirations.

Results

A pilot study was conducted ($n=240$), of which 57.9% of respondents were male. The majority of respondents were UK (67.9%) or Irish (10.8%) graduates. 74.2% hold membership of surgical or medical Royal Colleges. 49.6% hold another non-medical qualification (BSc, MSc, BA or MA), whereas 74.2% have no mandatory undergraduate radiology attachment and most did not undertake an

elective radiology attachment (80%) or special study module (82%) as undergraduates. 21.6% of respondents have been first-name author in an international journal once, with 8.8% doing so twice. 17.5% have been first-name author in a national journal once and 9.6% twice. 60% have presented at least once at an international meeting, and 21.3% have taken a year out for research purposes. 16.3% successfully obtained a research grant. 80.8% have not completed a higher degree, but the majority of respondents (80%) hope to complete a radiology subspecialty fellowship. The most popular areas within radiology were interventional radiology (34.6%), CT (28.3%) and MRI (22.5%). Academic radiology is one of the least popular specialties (5.41%).

Conclusions

Our study shows that the level of academic achievement of radiology trainees is high. This study provides interesting information concerning the current group of radiology trainees in these regions. It may provide a benchmark for consultants who are short-listing for radiology training posts, and will be of interest to doctors hoping to pursue a career in radiology. This study also demonstrated that, as in other specialties, a potential recruitment crisis in academic radiology exists. Insufficient trainees currently aspire to an academic career. Few have completed or plan to complete a higher degree. More opportunities should be created to train an academic workforce, possibly through academic clinical fellowships or clinical lectureship posts. Increased focus on undergraduate radiology training is necessary to encourage interest in academic radiology as a career choice for doctors.

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