



Evaluation of the Content and Accessibility of Websites for PM&R Residency Programs

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Abstract

Significance: Prior to applying to residency and interviewing, most of the applicants turn to the Internet to gain more information about the program, their residents and faculty members. Maintaining and updating the program website is critical especially during the current pandemic as most of the applicants are not able to visit the hospitals and interviews are being conducted virtually. Studies have demonstrated that amongst anesthesia and emergency medicine residency applicants, the content of the program website including curriculum, hospital location, faculty, current residents and research opportunities influences a prospective applicant's decision to apply to the program.

Objective: To evaluate comprehensiveness of PM&R residency program websites.

Design and Participants: Review of all PM&R residency program websites including information available on FREIDA is reviewed for comprehensiveness.

Main outcomes and measures: Review of multiple criteria including ease of finding links to the department website, criteria for application process, instruction, rotation schedule, research, clinical training and information about faculty members.

Results: Very few PM&R residency websites met all the criteria, and some were lacking useful information including requiring multiple attempts to reach the residency websites.

Conclusions and relevance: The FREIDA and hospital websites provide few direct links to PM&R residency websites. Individual program websites do not always effectively and completely convey information about the programs. The Internet is an underused resource for resident recruitment. The lack of information on these sites allows for future opportunity to optimize this resource.

Objectives

To review ease of accessibility and comprehensiveness of PM&R residency websites to prospective candidates.

Discussion

The internet continues to play an important role for medical students applying for PM&R residency programs. The applicants rely on databases like AMA-FREIDA to research the programs. This became even more crucial this year due to the current pandemic resulting in disruption in clinical rotations, and inability of medical students to visit the hospitals and meet with the faculty and the residents.

Unlike many other specialties, PM&R as a specialty is lesser-known with no core elective and exposure in many medical schools may be very limited.

An easy access to comprehensive websites may help potential applicants to choose the specialty and may result in better match helping both the candidates and the programs. The residency application is managed by the National Residency Match program and students turn to AMA FREIDA which provides basic details about the programs including contact information, the name of the program director, a brief description of the program, and, often, a link to the program's web site. Potential applicants may also rely on American Academy of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) and Association of Academic Physiatrists (AAP) for invaluable information about the specialty.

The competition for positions in PM&R residencies had historically been low, but this has dramatically reversed in recent years. The number of unfilled positions has also seen a drastic decrease over the past several years, with zero unfilled positions in 2014, compared with 21 unfilled positions in 2007 and 70 unfilled positions in 2001.

Applicants generally tend to apply to an excessive number of programs, particularly if there is difficulty evaluating differences among programs. Improving program websites may have significant implications on the residency recruitment process as it may help applicants to choose a program which may be a better "fit" and consistent with their career aspirations. It is even more relevant this year as candidates have not been able to visit the hospitals and may be relying predominantly on information available on the internet.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, a lot of residency programs have not kept pace with the growth of the internet or realized the power of it in reaching out to potential residency applicants. Medical students have increasingly been relying on websites to get more information and quickly comparing different programs to identify programs best suited to their needs and career aspirations. Further survey of applicants may shed light on the most important aspects of websites to make the determination while making their choices. However, some accredited PM&R residency websites lack easily accessible or complete web sites in the FREIDA Match database.

References

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