

Influence of Training Program Social Media Presence on Applicant Perceptions of Programs

Objective:

In the era of virtual interviews, social media is increasingly used by residency applicants to learn more about programs. We sought to determine the impact of programs' social media (SM) presence on an applicant's interest in, application to, and ranking of surgical residency programs.

Methods:

Applicants to Integrated Thoracic Surgery, Vascular Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Otolaryngology, and General Surgery residency programs were sent a 16-question, anonymous survey via Qualtrics to determine the value of SM and its impact on applicant perception of training programs. Surveys were distributed to all applicants following residency interviews but prior to applicant rank list submission. Applicants were informed that survey completion and results would have no bearing on their application or ranking.

Results:

Of 723 total applicants, 157 completed the survey in its entirety (22%). 76% (119/157) of applicants believed that SM provided a useful resource in helping them learn about a program, while 62% (97/157) expressed an active SM presence made them view a program more favorably. Only 5% (8/157) felt a SM presence would negatively impact a program's professional image or prestige. Across stages of the application cycle, 43% (68/157) responded that an active SM presence made them more likely to apply to a program, 31% (48/157) said it made them more likely to accept an interview offer, and 27% (43/157) thought it would influence them to rank a program higher. Applicants reported official residency program websites as their most important source of online information about programs (56%, n = 87), followed by Instagram (29%, n = 45), and Twitter (11%, n = 17). 49% (77/157) agreed that "social media provides a transparent view of a program's culture and camaraderie, with "Day-in-the-Life" videos (34%), individual resident profiles (25%), and photos from social events (19%) cited as the most helpful in learning about programs.

Conclusion:

Training programs' SM presence appears to have an impactful role in an applicants' perceptions of and interest in programs. Over a quarter of applicants rank programs with an active SM presence higher, and even larger influences are seen in decisions to apply and interview at a program.

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Influence of Training Program Social Media (SM) Presence Across Stages of Application Cycle

An active SM presence makes you more likely to:

