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12 Influencing Medical Student Selection of Emergency Medicine Residency Programs: The Interview Dinner, Food for Thought

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Background: Interest in EM has increased and it is challenging to select candidates that are qualified and a “good-fit.” Programs often offer a dinner prior to the interview to assist in showcasing the program’s assets in an informal setting. Previous studies have identified factors considered important by applicants in their residency selection process, but none have explored the influence of attendance to an applicant/resident (A/R) dinner on an applicant’s selection of programs.

Objective: To explore factors influencing candidate decision-making of EM residency programs based on the A/R dinner.

Methods: In this IRB approved study, 118 applicants who were granted interviews to our residency were surveyed after attending the A/R dinner and the interview. The survey consisted of 12 multiple choice questions gauged at elucidating the participants interest and feelings towards the interview dinner (Figure 1). Responses were collected anonymously and statistical analyses in the form of one-proportion z-tests were performed.

Self-reported answers:

1. How many interviews have you been on at this point?

Likert scale: 1=not at all important; 2= somewhat important; 3= very important

2. Do you feel the interview dinner is an important part of the interview process?

3. Has the interview dinner changed your perception about a program?

Likert scale: 1=a deterrent; 2=a catalyst; 3=neutral

5. Is having alcohol at the interview dinner a deterrent, catalyst, or is it neutral for ranking a program higher?

6. Does going out after the interview dinner to mingle with the current residents a deterrent, catalyst, or is it neutral for ranking a program higher?

Yes/No:

4. Do you feel the interview dinner is an appropriate way to measure your similarity to a program and its residents?

7. Do you feel that if you missed the interview dinner, you would be missing out on an important part of the interview process?

8. Do you feel that missing the interview dinner puts you at a disadvantage for being ranked higher on the rank list?

9. Is the interview dinner a hassle?

11. Do you feel that if you had to miss the interview dinner, you would have less of an impression of the program and the residents than if you had attended the dinner?

12. Would you be inclined to rank a program lower if you missed the interview dinner?

Likert scale: 1= act normally; 2= conform

10. Do you feel you act as you normally would at the interview dinner, or are you pressured into conforming/acting in certain way?

Figure 1. Survey instrument.

The survey was conducted after completion of the residency matching process ranking and actual matching of applicants in order to minimize response bias.

Results: Of the 118 candidates who had attended the interview dinner, 54 surveys were (45.8% response rate) returned; 2% had attended 0-4 interviews, 9% had attended 5-8 interviews, 59% had attended 9-12 interviews, and 30% had attended more than 12 interviews at the time of survey. The participant survey response analyses are included in Table 1.

Conclusion: Applicants applying to EM residency programs consider the A/R dinner before the interview to be a significant factor in helping them decide if they are a good fit for the program. While the elective A/R dinner is considered important to applicants and changed their overall impression of the program, applicants would still rank a program highly based solely on the interview day itself.

Table 1. Survey results.

Survey Question	Response 1 n (%)	Response 2 n (%)	Z-score	P-Value
	Not At All Important	Somewhat/Very Important		
2.	0 (0%)	54 (100%)	7.348	<0.0001
3.	12 (22%)	42 (78%)	5.585	<0.0001
	Deterrent	Neutral/Catalyst		
5.	0 (0%)	54 (100%)	7.348	<0.0001
6.	0 (0%)	54 (100%)	7.348	<0.0001
	Yes	No		
4.	50 (93%)	4 (7%)	6.246	<0.0001
7.	45 (83%)	9 (17%)	4.850	<0.0001
8.	50 (93%)	4 (7%)	6.246	<0.0001
9.	10 (19%)	44 (81%)	4.615	<0.0001
11.	40 (74%)	14 (26%)	3.527	0.0004
12.	8 (15%)	46 (85%)	5.713	<0.0001
	Act Normally	Conform		
10.	23 (43%)	31 (57%)	1.029	0.3036