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AUTHOR REPLY

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ultimate goal of improving the urology match process and resident training.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This study by Zhao et al provides an analysis of comments made in an anonymous online Google forum over a 3-year period. The authors utilized qualitative analytic methods in an attempt to ascertain what aspects of the interview process were most valued by applicants. This is certainly an intriguing question and I applaud the authors for researching this question.

The authors used a qualitative approach using grounded theory methodology. This is a well-known qualitative research method whereby the researchers analyze information to see what ideas emerge as pertinent.[1] The text being studied is analyzed line by line and coded identifying key ideas or phrases. These codes are then grouped into concepts and then into categories which are used to generate a theory about the data. Six categories were identified from their analysis: (1) efficiency and structure of interview day, (2) diverse fellowship trained faculty, (3) program culture and collegiality, (4) surgical and clinical training, (5) research, and (6) program benefits and location.

The paper concludes that the efficiency and structure of the interview day (particularly time with residents), culture and collegiality of the program, surgical and clinical training, location and benefits were all important factors to applicants. Interestingly, comments on research opportunities were less frequent and little to nothing was mentioned concerning the overall prestige of programs.

While the concept in this paper is interesting, the article has a number of limitations which need to be considered. The data set comes from an anonymous, open online forum, (https://www.urologymatch.com/). Therefore, the authors could not verify who the commenters were and could not know the number of unique respondents. It is entirely possible that some of the comments were not even from applicants and may have come from residents (current or former) or even faculty from the institutions being studied. Furthermore, because of the way the forum is formatted, the authors were not able to tell where 1 person's comment ended and another one started. The comments were independently analyzed by 2 of the authors. However, we are not provided with any details on how they came to agreement on coding and organizing the information. Lastly, the data can only tell us how often a particular category was commented on. Yet, we do not know how much these aspects truly mattered to the applicant and to what degree, if any, it influenced their decisions on how to rank programs.

Other papers have sent out surveys to applicants which allows for more direct conclusions about the preferences of applicants. However, surveys mostly allow for answers to predetermined questions.[2,3] Grounded theory research allows for researchers to look for what categories might be pertinent to further study.

Overall, this study provides a unique analysis of social media comments to gain insight into the most frequently discussed categories on urologymatch.com regarding urology residency programs and interview experiences. These identified categories can hopefully be used to guide further research on what matters to applicants on both the interview day and throughout the application process.

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AUTHOR REPLY

We greatly appreciate the reviewer's thorough editorial. Because of how the Urology Match Google Sheet was formatted, there were challenges in quantifying certain aspects of the data and the analyses.

The forum was independently read by both reviewers and a list of codes was generated and updated throughout the process. Coding is a method in which the researcher takes notes about what is said and searches for themes in the process. Themes were then identified through similar groupings of codes. For example, comments like "this program had 15-minute interviews" or "30-minute interviews" were coded as Interview Length. Similar codes including Interview Number and Interview Day Duration could belong together in a theme of "Structure of Interview Day." Thematic categories were discussed and combined between the two coders and found be similar. The fact that both coders independently generated the same 6 thematic categories through this process speaks to the strengths of the themes within the data.

These results of our study are certainly timely. As away rotations have been affected at many institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews will hold more weight for applicants and programs alike. We hope that these results can help residency programs optimize their interview day to provide an educational and positive experience for the applicants.

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