Abstract

Background: Medical students use social media (SM) as a tool to learn about residency programs throughout the application process, but it is unclear what content is perceived as favorable and the extent to which SM is utilized in this process.

Hypothesis/Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify medical student perceptions of SM posts by residency programs and the influence this has on application decisions.

Study Design: Descriptive Epidemiology Study

Methods: Using a five-point Likert scale, a survey was written to assess medical student perceptions of SM posts by residency programs. The survey was administered via email to a United States medical school's classes of 2024 and 2023. Perception of content type and differences between classes were analyzed.

Results: 304 students were invited to complete the survey with a total of 140 (46%) students completing it. Overall, 90% of respondents endorsed SM use at least "every day" or "every week;" 80% reported using SM to seek or view information related to their specialty choice with 27% of the students saying that content posted by a residency program was "likely" or "very likely" to influence their decision to apply for an acting internship. Strongly positive posts included those that highlight (1) a "day in the life" of a resident, (2) current residents' lives, accomplishments, and interests, (3) fun activities organized for residents, and (4) the compensation and support provided by the program. Current fourth-year medical students were more likely to favor posts providing insights into the application process and statistics of current classes ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: SM is a valuable tool for medical students to learn about residency programs. Programs who wish to effectively interact with students should consider posting content viewed most positively, Content that is viewed less favorably should be posted sparingly.