

An Analysis of Combined and Integrated Plastic Surgery Residency Websites

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Abstract

Background: Medical students applying for plastic surgery residency utilize the Internet to manage their residency applications. Applicants often apply to many programs and rely on advice from colleagues, mentors, and information gathered from plastic surgery residency websites (PSRWs). The purpose of the present study was to evaluate online content of integrated and combined PSRWs with respect to resident recruitment and education.

Methods: Websites from all 63 integrated and combined plastic surgery residencies available to graduating medical students during the 2013 academic year were available for study inclusion. PSRWs were evaluated for comprehensiveness in the domains of resident education and recruitment. Residency programs were compared according to program characteristics using the Student t test and ANOVA with Tukey method.

Results: Of the 63 residencies available to graduating medical students, only 57 had combined or integrated program information on their PSRWs (91%). In the domain of resident recruitment, evaluators found an average of 5.5 of 15 content items (37%, Figure 1). As a whole, 26% of PSRWs had academic conference schedules, 18% had call schedules, and only 9% had operative case listings. For resident education, PSRWs provided an average of 4.6 of 15 content items (31%, Figure 2). Only 32% of PSRWs had interview schedules, 25% had graduate fellowship information, and 5% had information on board exam performance. Upon comparison, programs in the Midwest had more online recruitment content than programs in the West (47% vs. 24%, $P < 0.01$). Additionally, programs with a larger class of incoming residents (2 vs. 1) had greater online recruitment content (40% vs. 27%, $P < 0.05$). Larger programs with 3 integrated spots had more online education content than smaller programs with only 1 integrated spot (40% vs. 19%, $P < 0.01$).

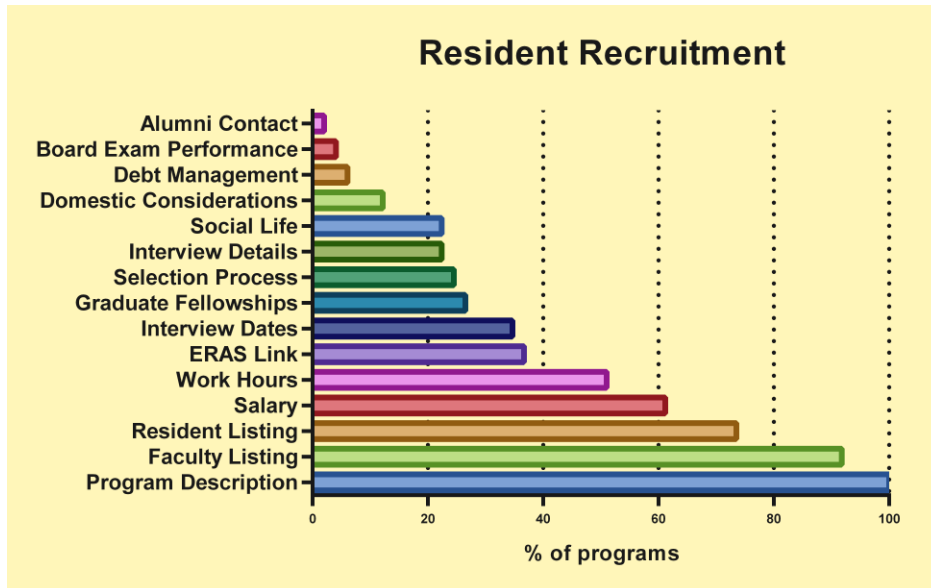


Figure 1. Resident Recruitment Content

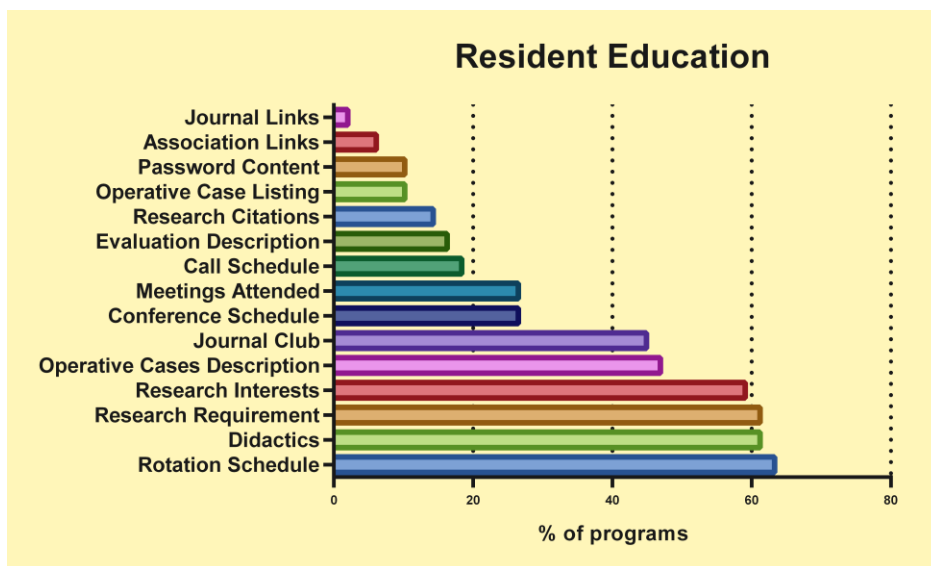


Figure 2. Resident Education Content

Conclusions: PSRWs often do not provide basic program information for residency applicants. The paucity of online content suggests PSRWs are underutilized as an educational and recruitment tool. These findings have implications for applicants and plastic surgery residency programs, and there may be future opportunity to optimize this educational tool.