Introducing First-Year Radiology Residents to the ACR at the AMCLC meeting and The Effect on ACR and State Radiologic Society Membership and Participation: A Three-year Experience

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INTRODUCTION

There are many challenges and opportunities in today’s world for the field of radiology. The participation of young generation is vital to us. Drs Hui and Vaughn (1) commented: “it is essential that young radiologists are exposed to the overarching issues that affect us” and that “it is within the ACR that the resident has the best venue for exposure to these vital issues.” Minnesota Radiological Society (MRS), began a long-term research project at the 2009 AMCLC meeting in Washington, DC. The aim of the project was to determine if bringing first-year radiology residents to the conference would increase their knowledge about issues facing the field of radiology while teaching them about the ACR and MRS and whether their future membership and participation in these organizations would increase.

METHODS

Every year since 2009, all 22-24 first-year diagnostic radiology residents from University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic were invited to attend first 3 days of the ACR AMCLC meeting. External funding was secured through generous donations from radiologic and therapeutic radiologic groups. All expenses related to travel and lodging were covered. The two residency programs gave wholehearted support to accommodate one working day off for the residents from the schedule. Preconference and postconference questionnaires were given to the first-year residents. First section of preconference was objective with each answer was given 1-5, predominantly related to topics on ACR and MRS. Second section was subjective self-assessment survey on understanding of various topics on a 4-point scale. The last question asked the residents to list the key issues facing radiology. The postconference questionnaire was identical, with the addition of section asking about conference experience, and likelihood of joining ACR and MRS in future. The participants were also asked to list their 3 most valuable conference experiences.

The responses were organized on the excel sheet, and the comparisons were made between the preconference and postconference responses. The responses to the question regarding most valuable experience and future ACR/MRS memberships were analyzed similarly.

ACR/MRS questionnaire

1. What are ACR, RFS and MRS abbreviations for?
2. In addition to Diagnostic Radiologists, what are the other 5 groups represented by the ACR and MRS?
3. What are 2 aspects of the MRS relationship to the ACR?
4. Is it possible to be a member of the MRS without being a member of the ACR?
5. Is it possible to be a member of the ACR without being a member of the MRS?
6. What are the 2 main governing bodies of the ACR?
7. How often does the ACR Council meet?
8. How often does the MRS general assembly meet?
9. List 3 things the ACR does for radiologists?
10. List 3 things the MRS does for radiologists?
11. What is the name of the official journal of the ACR?
12. What is the name of the ACR journal?
13. What does RADPAC stand for?
14. What is the primary source of funding for RADPAC?

RESULTS

Average total scores for both subjective and objective responses were increased after the conference. The average objective score ranging between 9.1 and 12.0 increased to 16.6-18.7 (maximum possible 26). The difference was statistically significant, with p-value < 0.001. In fact, each individual score did increase significantly without exception. The maximum increase was 18. After the conference, the key issues mentioned facing radiology were more than preconference, with top three being health care reforms/imaging reimbursement cuts, turf wars, and overutilization.

The top most valuable experiences reported by participants were business in radiology lectures, learning about ACR functioning, networking, and learning about politics and economics of radiology. Postconference survey showed that most residents were highly satisfied or satisfied with their experience at AMCLC. The vast majority of residents were highly likely or likely to join ACR and MRS.

DISCUSSION

All state-wide first-year radiology residents were invited and majority of them attended the AMCLC meetings in respective years of 2009-2011. Early results indicate that attending AMCLC was a positive experience for first year radiology residents and that they gained significant knowledge about the subject of organized radiology and the roles played by the ACR and state societies in the lives of all radiologists. Our results also strongly suggest that our long-term objectives of increasing future ACR and state chapter membership and participation relative to the national average will be met as well. We plan to continue this project each year for the foreseeable future, provided funding is available, to continue educating residents and to increase the sample size for the long-term outcomes analysis. We also encourage other state chapters to participate as well and are eager to share our questionnaire should they decide to use one. Alternatively, state chapters may wish to consider other, less expensive means of achieving similar results, by having special programs for residents at state chapter meetings or other local events. Future trips to the AMCLC should give residents as much chance as possible to interact with other residents and radiologists in informal settings, as the opportunity to establish such personal connections was the most valuable experience overall listed by the participants. Clearly emphasizing the practical organizational aspects of the ACR and state societies, perhaps through didactic or question-and-answer sessions, would also be helpful, as this remained an area of knowledge deficiency for participants after the conference. Five-year and 10-year follow-up studies will be necessary to see if the positive effect on membership rates and activity levels actually occurs.

REFERENCES


First-year Radiology Residents at AMCLC 2009

Residents exposure to Capitol Hill during AMCLC 2011