

Residency is More Than Just Image Interpretation

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Radiology residency is a time when you, as a physician, will learn the essential skills of image interpretation. Between year 1 and year 4, you can expect to see exponential growth in your knowledge of imaging and mastery of the nuances required to carry out the responsibilities of your chosen profession.

And yet there are other, supplemental skills that you should be sure to learn during this time, not just to make you a more competent radiologist, but also to develop yourself as a well-rounded physician who can succeed in both patient care and your specialty within the profession.

Make Yourself Clear

One of the most important skills is communication. As radiologists, we primarily communicate through our reports. Throughout our journey as physicians (perhaps even as patients) we have all experienced a variety of reporting styles. We have encountered concise radiologists who get right to the point. We have also encountered verbose radiologists who take pride in extensively detailing every incidental finding in every image.

There is no right or wrong when it comes to style; while learning which one works for you is important, making sure to highlight the most actionable findings clearly to all readers should be your top priority. Obtaining feedback from those around you is a good way to figure out what works

and what doesn't. Read as many reports as possible to learn what you like and do not like.

Lead the Way

Another valuable skill is leadership. Leadership skills can only be acquired through practice, and residency is a great time to start working on and solidifying them. Serving as a chief resident, for example, affords experience in learning how to balance the needs of various parties and how to behave as a role model to your co-residents. To be sure, serving as a chief resident will require a large time commitment, but it can also be an especially transformative experience.

There likely are also many opportunities to practice leadership skills within your own department and as part of organizations such as the American College of Radiology and the Radiological Society of North America. Many of these positions require minimal time on your part, but they can help you hone your communication skills and provide great networking opportunities that can serve you for the rest of your career.

Teach Yourself a Lesson

Teaching is also a skill well worth practicing during residency. Many programs are affiliated with medical schools; you may find yourself reading studies with a student at your side. You may

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also be presented with opportunities to teach at the medical school itself. Your day-to-day activities as a radiologist, moreover, will require the ability to teach to some degree, whether it's educating the physicians who come to your reading room to review study findings, or it's offering a phone or video consult.

Get Technical

Finally, technical skills such as ultrasound scanning and interventional procedures are very important to learn during residency. These skills can be extremely useful when you are asked to take a second look by a technologist. Experienced technologists are often great teachers, and you may never again get the kind of time to dedicate to learning

scanning and procedural techniques that you have during training. You may think you're "never going to need that skill," but you also never truly know where your career may lead you. You may someday need to know how to perform a breast biopsy—despite swearing off mammography for life!

Residency is more than just a time to learn how to be a radiologist. It is a time to learn how to run an imaging service, and while the main part of your job is to read images, becoming a valued team player is just as important.

Residency can feel very long, but it is actually quite a brief portion of your career. Devote as much time as you can to learning about communicating, leading, teaching, and honing the technical skills that will serve you well once you begin practicing independently.