

Are You New Here? Welcome!

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As Associate Editor of the newly formed “Early Career Radiologist” section of our journal’s editorial advisory board, I am pleased to welcome you to the first installment of “First Impressions: Practical Insights for New Radiologists.” We are thrilled to bring you content that is pertinent to young radiologists – trainees and those of us in the first few years of our career as well as medical students interested in radiology. We’ve gotten lots of applications from radiology trainees and medical students, but applications are still being accepted. Message our Editor-in-Chief, Erin Schwartz, at erin@appliedradiology.com with your CV and some content recommendations.

The reason for creating this department is that the beginning of one’s career is a special, unique, and scary time. Some of us are just picking up a microphone for the first time, learning how to scroll through a computed tomography (CT) scan, and feeling intimidated by each phone call. Others are reviewing contracts and figuring out the red flags to avoid when signing on the dotted line for that first attending job. All of us are figuring out how to be the best radiologists possible, learn how to communicate our findings, and build our confidence without someone watching over our shoulder. These experiences will be made much easier by the helping hand of mentors and, hopefully, by wise words from this new department.

Ultimately, our goal is to cater to the needs of radiologists who are just starting to navigate the world of radiology. Whether you are a trainee, a budding radiologist, or even a seasoned veteran looking to understand your younger colleagues, we hope you will glean something useful and worthwhile with each new installment. After all, our tagline is “Practical Insights for New Radiologists.”

And what better way to begin than by sharing some pearls of advice? See the sidebar for five of our best insights to help ease your transition into radiology residency, fellowship, or “attending-hood,” if you will.

Your training is the time to make great calls and take on the hard cases under the safety of an attending watching over your shoulder. Once you’re comfortable, the rest becomes fun and enjoyable, and that’s the part that will make you more and more successful with each passing day. Here’s to taking this journey together!

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Get Off on the Right Foot: Five Pearls of Wisdom for Starting Out in Radiology

1. Take your time.

Over the coming months and years, you will build speed and confidence, but remember, accuracy is more important than speed. Even later in your career, you will achieve a maximum speed beyond which you are more likely to miss important findings. Before you can reach that point, you must develop your radiology skillset, which only happens by working through studies calmly and carefully. The beginning of your career is not the time to worry about speed.

2. Build your support system.

There will be studies, probably every day, where you wish you had a second pair of eyes on the images or someone to lend an ear. Find colleagues within your department so that you can read challenging cases with confidence.

3. Stay confident.

As a radiologist, you will miss things. This can be disheartening, and you may lose confidence. But take some time out to analyze the situation. Why did you miss the finding? Should it be added to your search pattern? Was it the time of day? Were you interrupted? Find the reason (or combination of reasons!) so that you are ready for the next time you face a similar circumstance. The best thing you can do is to make a mental note to yourself and resolve never to miss that finding again.

4. Learn one new thing every day.

There is something to learn from every study – even the normal appearances are essential to a radiologist's knowledge base. See something interesting on a study? Find and review relevant information online. This takes less than 10 minutes; over time you will greatly increase your imaging database so that you can easily identify it the next time you come across a similar finding.

5. Challenge yourself.

As you become more comfortable with the pace and knowledge required to become a great radiologist, start challenging yourself each day. Whether it's trying to read one more study, to pick up one more advanced case, or to teach a colleague about a radiology finding, find ways to challenge yourself. Do not shy away from the hard cases, and don't get comfortable with just being good.