Redesign of a Residency Applicant Interview and Selection Process: Leveraging Efficiencies, Technologies, and Group Experiences

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Introduction and Background

- Waco Family Medicine Residency Program has a long history of an effective yet time-consuming resident recruiting process.
- 12-12-12 community-based, unopposed residency program operating in an FQHC/CHC context.
- Significant increase in applications each year; large number from out of state due to broad-spectrum training offered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Applications</th>
<th>U.S. Graduates</th>
<th>Scheduled Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>113</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>89</td>
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- Historical interviewing methodology:
  - 2-3 applicants interviewed daily, Monday through Friday
  - Program Director (PD) interviewed every single applicant
  - Nightly dinners in a restaurant or resident’s home the night before the interview

- Each member of RSC reviewed every interviewee’s application in depth

- Problems identified:
  1. PD interviewed every candidate - unsustainable and led to burnout at end of season
  2. Paucity of feedback from the residents who met the candidates
  3. Redundant and excessive work on the RSC - unsustainable with increased numbers of applicants
  4. A desire to include our clinical psychologist in more interviews, but limited availability with his clinical responsibilities
  5. Applicants met only a select and limited group of residents and faculty (we wanted to show off more of a great asset)

Questions and Objective

- How can we design an interview process that is sustainable?
- How can we better probe the character and personality of an applicant during a brief visit?
- Can we learn from the way college fraternal organizations “rush” large numbers of applicants?
- In 2013, can we use technology to make this better?

Goal - improve the evaluative component of the interview while showcasing resident and faculty camaraderie and creating an excellent interview experience.*

* Two interview-day priorities, based on a PubMed literature review

Problem Solving

1. Program Director Interview
   - Consolidated to one interview day per week, 8-10 applicants/day
   - Cancelled non-essential faculty activities on Monday mornings and lunch conferences at noon
   - Required 4-5 faculty to interview, with every faculty member performing four, 30-minute interviews
   - PD was able to interview 40-50% of all applicants with an emphasis on meeting every candidate during lunch sessions. Also targeted highly valued applicants.
   - 1-hour, relaxed session at the beginning of the day with all applicants to deliver program overview and answer questions

2. Paucity of feedback from residents who met applicants
   - Leveraged point-of-contact technology to create a system to increase both resident knowledge of applicants and to facilitate immediate feedback
   - Used the app, Evernote, to create “Discards” for each applicant that were easily accessible by residents and faculty
   - Embedded a SurveyMonkey link in each Biocard to create a point-of-contact, brief feedback survey for residents and faculty
   - We received a 75% response rate to an anonymous, post-interview survey detailing how our interview process compared to other programs:
     - Rate the overall interview experience
     - Self-identified personality type

3. Redundant and excessive work for the RSC - unsustainable with increased applicants
   - We standardized the review, written summary and scoring system and divided the RSC into 4 teams, each with one faculty member and resident.
   - Each team was responsible for completely reviewing, summarizing and scoring one to 3 applicants.
   - Discussion of the “Bridge Fable,” by Edwin Friedman
   - This group activity was composed of one to two activities (time permitting):
     - 10 ambiguous ethical scenarios that were rated individually and then as a group
     - Lunch was redesigned to resemble a fraternity or sorority “rush”
   - At the beginning of the interview day, the PD conducted a relaxed, somewhat humorous (so! at lunch) 1-hour, relaxed session at the beginning of the day with all applicants to deliver program overview and question and answer session

4. Limited availability of clinical psychologist for interviewing
   - A subsection of the responses were segregated based on the applicant’s self-identification of personality type - introvert or extrovert. The only significant difference was that extroverts responded more favorably to the group luncheon compared to the introverts (p<0.05).
   - The number of resident responses were also calculated revealing an 18% increase in response rate per applicant as compared to the 2012-2013 season.

5. Applicants previously met only a few residents and faculty
   - Lunch was redesigned to resemble a fraternity or sorority “rush”
   - 10 tall cocktail tables were spaced around a central buffet
   - Applicants remained at their own cocktail table while residents and faculty rotated tables every 5-10 minutes

Discussion and Conclusions

- The new process has shown itself to be shared, predictable and sustainable.
- A standardized review and pre-ranking of applicants enabled targeted recruiting of high-value candidates, helped focus interviews and assisted in the final ranking process.
- Due to the significantly increased resident feedback, we were able to incorporate a resident score for each applicant. However, the three survey questions had minimal intra-applicant variation. Therefore we could shorten the survey to one question, “Do you want this applicant here,” with an open ended option at the end.
- Most applicants enjoyed the group activity while a few did not. Ultimately, the exercise often gave insight into the character of applicants and was useful for applicant ranking.
- The mixer-style luncheon proved to be one of the most popular aspects of the interview.
- The RSC felt that their workload was significantly reduced and that the standardized method of evaluation was beneficial and effective, even though not every RSC member reviewed every applicant in depth.
- Ultimately we believe the changes were very positive and that these practices and tools can be replicated at other residencies.