

Graduate Medical Education Virtual Recruitment Offers Opportunity to Innovate Using Social Media

The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed disrupted the recruitment and application cycle for 2020–2021. Two perspectives published in the October 2020 issue of the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* provided great insight into the types of content programs should attend to when setting up their virtual platforms and the ways they could connect and communicate with prospective trainees.^{1,2}

As a current pediatric fellow and recent applicant, I agree that graduate medical education (GME) programs can improve their recruitment and marketing using social media. In the past year I have gained experience running the social media accounts for my fellowship program and for a national pediatric conference. I have since learned that, as a medical education community, we can improve the application and interview process by providing more up-to-date and innovative materials to trainees through social media.

Bernstein et al² identified potential Twitter account innovation to improve programs' online presence. We have utilized many of these innovations, which have worked well. In addition, using themed hashtags to promote program faculty members or distinguishing aspects of the program has been well received by applicants. Many programs are creating and sharing educational content, such as online journal clubs, and recapping teaching sessions. Our program also increased exposure by engaging in discussions with other programs, especially during national conferences.

Ashrafzadeh et al¹ discussed how organizing informal pre-interview get-togethers for interviewees can help improve program transparency. Informal interview gatherings are invaluable to applicants. We have used Twitter to promote virtual get-togethers in this current interview season with great success. It has allowed applicants to meet current trainees and more members of the program

while not feeling the pressure of the interview session. Using social media to increase program transparency in these ways should be a major goal for all GME programs.

The change to a virtual recruitment and interview process offers the opportunity to study habits of trainees and programs, as Ashrafzadeh et al discussed briefly. Having an active Twitter account has been shown to result in increased program fill rates.³ Furthermore, programs can use Twitter to promote the scholarly work of their residents and fellows, as publications that are heavily tweeted are 11 times more likely to be cited.⁴ We have begun tracking our social media account's number of followers and impressions to better understand our digital footprint. We can repurpose conceptual frameworks, such as Bloom's taxonomy,⁵ for social media to foster improved engagement. By studying the impact of social media on recruitment, programs can innovate and improve the recruitment process for both trainees and programs.

Bernstein et al noted, "Virtual recruitment may lead to new practices and opportunities that last beyond the pandemic."² The COVID-19 pandemic has altered recruitment and the interview process in GME, likely forever. The GME community has a unique opportunity to learn from our trainees and innovate to create a recruitment and interview environment that is more engaging, transparent, informative, and equitable. The use of social media to augment marketing and recruitment is just the beginning.

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