

Kind of a Big Dill: An Innovative Adult and Child Neurology Resident-Versus-Faculty Pickleball Tournament

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Setting and Problem

The game of pickleball gained popularity among the adult and child neurology residents at the University of Michigan from 2021 to 2022. With the decline in well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part thought to be related to a reduction of in-person social events engaging residents and faculty across departments, we aimed to capitalize on pickleball popularity and organize an annual resident-versus-faculty pickleball tournament.

Intervention

We hosted resident-versus-faculty pickleball tournaments in August 2022 and July 2023. We invited all adult and child neurology residents and faculty along with their partners and families. We rented a local indoor tennis court and divided the court into smaller pickleball courts (2 the first year, and 4 the second year). We assigned doubles teams and created a draw. The 2022 draw followed a single elimination format with a consolation bracket, shifting to a round-robin format in 2023 due to increased participation. Games were played to 7 points in 2022 and time-limited to 7 minutes in 2023. Doubles partners created team names, and all residents and faculty voted on best and corniest names. Costumes were encouraged. We allocated points based on participation (including cheering), team name winners, and tournament performance.

Outcomes to Date

Time to organize the tournament was approximately 20 hours per year. The total cost in the initial year was \$250, which included a \$150 fee for a 2-hour court rental and \$100 for food and printing of the draw. In 2023, the court rental cost increased to \$300 to cover post-event cleaning, resulting in a total expense of \$400. The adult and child neurology

residency programs covered the cost in 2023; neither residents nor faculty were charged.

Participant numbers rose from 32 pickleball players in 2022 to 46 in 2023. A resident doubles team won both years, and residents also won both years in terms of overall points. Best team names were “Spike & Slow Wave” (2022) and “Developmental Dill-Lei’s” (2023). Corniest team names were “Team LorazeDAN: We DANpen your excitability” (2022) and “The Amyg-dill-as” (2023). In 2023 we awarded points to best game-day outfit; the “Developmental Dill-Lei’s” and the “Wingmen” won.

Outside of high participation in the tournament, measures of engagement included faculty hosting a practice session prior to the 2023 tournament and the adult neurology department chair subsequently reserving weekly pickleball court times for residents and faculty for the following year (free to residents, with a minor subsidy from participating faculty).

Tournament descriptions and photos of the tournaments were advertised on the adult and child neurology social media pages (FIGURE), as well as on the social media pages of the residency program directors. Photos were also included in recruitment materials.

Although the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) well-being scores are influenced by many variables beyond single social events, we noted improvement in scores across the 2 programs. For adult neurology, between the 2022 and 2023 ACGME Resident Well-Being Surveys, scores improved for 8 of 12 questions, remained stable for 3, and decreased for 1. For child neurology, scores improved for 7 of 12 questions, remained stable for 3, and decreased for 2.

Due to their success, we plan to continue to host annual resident-versus-faculty pickleball tournaments, covered by program funds. We encourage other programs to consider similar group wellness events.



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FIGURE

Pickleball Tournament Instagram Post



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