Best Practice for Recruiting Good, Better, and Best Residents

CORD 2013 – Denver, CO

Spring

Review your program’s accessibility to medical students. – must be easy and simple
1. Website – easy to navigate for medical student/residency information
2. Affiliated medical school – easy for them to refer students to residency?
3. Shadowing – can medical students gain permission to shadow?
4. National information: SAEM and Frieda and Opportunities for DO programs
Is the program information current?

Quality check: Pair up with a coordinator from another specialty and evaluate each other’s programs for the above qualities – easy and simple.

Review the information presented to the medical student – must be valuable to them
1. Include minimum applicant requirements, especially the number of Letters of Recommendation
2. State the requirements for:
   a. Reporting of Step 2: USMLE or COMLEX
   b. Acceptance of COMLEX only for DO applicants to allopathic programs
   c. ECFMG certificate for foreign medical graduates
   d. Acceptance of applicants beyond PGY 1 year
   e. Types of VISAs sponsored
3. Application cut off
4. Days of the week your program interviews, and state full day or partial day. If partial day, is the interview in the morning or afternoon?

Quality check: Put the answers to the above questions in a FAQ sheet. Ask current medical students who you meet while rotating through your department if the information is valuable.

Coordinator Preparation: Behind the scenes. This step is for YOU.
1. Reserve all rooms and audio visual equipment.
2. Re-confirm the recruitment budget with your administrators.
3. Get ERAS logistics in place.

Quality check: Document the above information in a “quick reference guide” so when asked about these logistically items, you have the answers. This will save you a lot of time in the future.

Summer

Prepare your recruitment materials – see them only from the eyes of a medical student
1. Understand reasons why a medical student would come to your program.
2. Get the answers to a medical student’s questions:
   a. Can I live on a resident’s salary?
   b. Where do I live if I match in your program?
   c. What will my schedule be?
   d. Which residents can I talk to now?
   e. What do the residents do in their spare time?
   f. Why did they come to the program?
3. Determine the best ways to communicate this information
4. Put together draft materials

Quality check: Ask a current PGY 1 for his/her opinion. Ask if these materials surpass the best residency location visited during his/her interviewing days.
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Get a couple residents to be your advisory group – Include them in the recruitment process
1. Show your resident advisory group you recruitment materials.
2. Trust their judgment and make adjustments and changes.
3. Ask your advisory group questions to validate your intuitions and keep you up-to-date.

Quality check: If they are eager to promote the residency, then you will have a successful recruitment. If not, problems are brewing, and the coordinator cannot fix them alone.

Autumn

Understand ERAS to best prepare your program for application review and applicant selection. This is a special niche for the coordinator.
1. Track applicant data:
   a. Number of applicants
   b. From which medical schools; track states
   c. When applications are received
   d. Trends in Board Scores
   e. Compare data from year to year
   f. Board scores and passage rates
2. Use the applicant data to market your program.
   a. Attend residency fairs at the schools you receive the most applications.
   b. Research your competition in the areas where the applicants attend school.
   c. Report the applicant data to your medical student coordinator in hopes of accepting more rotating medical students from those schools.
   d. Adjust your recruitment materials, such as what your city has to offer, to match the expectations of the applicants.

Quality check: Present the above data to your residency leadership, and get ideas about how to best use this information. Encourage your GME office to have this kind of data for all residency programs in your training organization.

Reduce the burden associated with reviewing the applications. Lead your program.
1. Use ERAS filters and excel export feature to manage the data.
2. Keep surfing through ERAS to be knowledgeable of the applicants applying to your program.
3. Inactivate any applicants you will not invite, and consider sending out a notification of this to them.
4. Keep track of the applicant review process—who is reviewing, which application was reviewed, decisions regarding whom to invite, how many were reviewed and how many yet to review.
5. Remain positive and organized. Others are looking to the coordinator for stability, poise, and motivation.

Invite your applicants. This is your first impression to the applicant. Make it a good one.
1. Have all interviewing details established before you send out an invitation.
2. Be clear and concise in your invitation.
3. Send the invitation to yourself first, then to the applicants.
4. Be quick and efficient in all communications. Your program is competing for their attention against the 40 or more programs who just invited them, too.
5. Make sure all of your directions are correct. Make sure street addresses are recognized by GPSs and Garmins.

Quality check: You be the judge of your own work. Self evaluate how the invitation and scheduling process is going. Is it swift and accurate? Are you or the applicants frustrated? Make notations regarding what is going well and not so good. Can you figure out why? It’s up to you to fix and adjust either now or for the next recruitment season.
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Enjoy the interview day. The coordinator sets the tone for the day. A good program director enjoys this day with you, too.

1. Meet and greet the applicants. Become memorable to them.
2. Lead the applicants through the day. An agenda is not enough for them to follow. Instruct and converse with them throughout the day. Less frustration for the applicant translates into “I think I can make it through residency at this program.”
3. Have fun.

Evaluate the process. A must, and usually falls on the coordinator’s desk.

1. Decide what you want to evaluate.
2. Match the evaluation questions to what you want to learn about recruitment.
3. Coordinators are most interested in getting feedback about the agenda and logistics of the day; program directors and residents are most interested in knowing how they are perceived.
4. Based on the evaluation data, make at least one change each year. Keep it fresh.
5. Evaluate all of those involved: applicants, interviewers, residents, and support staff.

Quality check: Did you learn something during this recruitment process? Coordinators who are involved and care learn a lot every year and strive to make the next year better for themselves and the program.