



Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

Elsevier hereby grants permission to make all its COVID-19-related research that is available on the COVID-19 resource centre - including this research content - immediately available in PubMed Central and other publicly funded repositories, such as the WHO COVID database with rights for unrestricted research re-use and analyses in any form or by any means with acknowledgement of the original source. These permissions are granted for free by Elsevier for as long as the COVID-19 resource centre remains active.

See Article page XXX.

Commentary: Are thoracic surgery program websites a charming enough vitrine?

Ali Shirafkan, MD, and Ikenna Okereke, MD

In this era of rapid advancement in technology, most institutions use websites and social platforms (eg, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) as charming vitrines for the details of their organizations.^{1,2} Residency and fellowship applicants are increasingly trusting the information provided on these platforms to help them choose the programs to which they will apply, interview, and ultimately develop their rank list.³ Studies have shown that more than two-thirds of applicants will use a program's online data to decide whether or not to apply to a particular program.⁴

For their study, Ruddell and colleagues⁵ evaluated the online content of all 91 thoracic surgery traditional and integrated residency programs. They reviewed both the official website and all social media links of each program. The authors assessed the available content and identified areas for improvement. They assessed the presence of 22 critical pieces of information including, but not limited to, surgical training, expectations, curriculum information, and lifestyle components. They found that more than half of the programs reported information on rotations, number of available positions, faculty list, and contact information of program coordinators. In contrast, <20% of programs provided data on board exam pass rates, careers of the trainees after graduation, call duties, and number/type of cases performed by trainees. And no program reported trainee retention rates. Whereas social media was used

From the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Tex.

Disclosures: The authors reported no conflicts of interest.

The *Journal* policy requires editors and reviewers to disclose conflicts of interest and to decline handling or reviewing manuscripts for which they may have a conflict of interest. The editors and reviewers of this article have no conflicts of interest.

Received for publication June 24, 2020; revisions received June 24, 2020; accepted for publication June 24, 2020.

Address for reprints: Ikenna Okereke, MD, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, University of Texas Medical Branch, 301 University Blvd, Galveston, TX (E-mail: ikokerek@utmb.edu).

J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg 2020; ■:1-2
0022-5223/\$36.00

Copyright © 2020 Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcvs.2020.06.120>



Ali Shirafkan, MD, and Ikenna Okereke, MD

CENTRAL MESSAGE

Most websites for cardiothoracic surgery training programs lack comprehensive program information. Despite the fact that applicants will increasingly use these websites when creating rank lists.

by approximately one-third of programs, only 10% of the official websites had a link for the corresponding social media site.

In the middle of the 2020 thoracic surgery interview season, a restriction on travel and social gatherings was enforced in response to the coronavirus 2019 pandemic. The majority of in-person interviews were canceled and replaced with online interviews using platforms such as Microsoft Teams (Microsoft Inc, Redmond, Wash), Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, San Jose, Calif), and Skype (Palo Alto, Calif). Before this dramatic occurrence, it would be expected that information not available on program websites would be conveyed to applicants during in-person interviews. But applicants during this latest interview cycle likely utilized online information about programs more than past applicants in deciding their rank lists. These disruptions and social distancing policies have made clear the importance of the websites of thoracic surgery training programs going forward. If the websites are updated to provide timely and accurate information, programs can improve their recruitment efforts.

Although the coronavirus 2019 pandemic resulted in travel restrictions that affected programs and applicants alike, there were many important lessons that were learned. The article by Ruddell and colleagues⁵ nicely shows that the websites of most training programs need to be more comprehensive. It is practical to recommend that all thoracic surgery programs update their website content, provide links to faculty and resident webpages, and possibly

create a virtual tour of the institution and hospitals. To standardize the content, a panel of program directors could use this article to formulate a list of vital contents for every cardiothoracic surgery program website.

References

1. Embi PJ, Desai S, Cooney TG. Use and utility of Web-based residency program information: a survey of residency applicants. *J Med Internet Res.* 2003;5:e22.
2. Gaeta TJ, Birkhahn RH, Lamont D, Banga N, Bove JJ. Aspects of residency programs' web sites important to student applicants. *Acad Emerg Med.* 2005;12:89-92.
3. Stefanidis D, Miles WS, Greene FL. Factors influencing residency choice of general surgery applicants—how important is the availability of a skills curriculum? *J Surg Educ.* 2009;66:325-9.
4. Mahler SA, Wagner MJ, Church A, Sokolosky M, Cline DM. Importance of residency program web sites to emergency medicine applicants. *J Emerg Med.* 2009;36:83-8.
5. Ruddell JH, Tang OY, Persaud B, Elorai EM, Daniels AH, Ng T. Thoracic surgery program websites: bridging the content gap for improved applicant recruitment. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* July 17, 2020 [Epub ahead of print].

000 Commentary: Are thoracic surgery program websites a charming enough vitrine?

Ali Shirafkan, MD, and Ikenna Okereke, MD, Galveston, Tex

Most websites for cardiothoracic surgery training programs lack comprehensive program information. Despite the fact that applicants will increasingly use these websites when creating rank lists.