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Spotlight on Special Topics

MOCK-TALES: PREPARING CARDIOVASCULAR MEDICINE FELLOWSHIP APPLICANTS FOR VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT DURING COVID-19

Poster Contributions

Saturday, May 15, 2021, 12:15 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Session Title: Spotlight on Special Topics: Training and Lifelong Learning 2

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Background: The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has transformed the cardiovascular fellowship recruitment process. Because of infection control mandates, fellowship recruitment interviews were conducted virtually in the fall of 2020. We hypothesized that applicants lacked prior experience with the virtual interview format and would benefit from a simulated interview experience. As such, the American College of Cardiology Fellows in Training Leadership Council created and evaluated the impact of a novel mock virtual interview initiative.

Methods: Fifty applicants were offered, on a first come first served basis, the opportunity to conduct mock fellowship interviews with volunteer cardiovascular fellows in a virtual format. Applicant-fellow matches were assigned at random by ACC staff. Data on demographics and virtual interaction experience were collected before and after the mock interview.

Results: 46 applicants, representing 18 states, submitted the pre-interview survey, and 23 completed the post-interview survey. The median age of applicants was 29 years (range 26-36). 35% were female, 30% were graduates of a foreign medical institution, and 88% were of non-white race. Only 13% had previous exposure to a virtual interview format. After the interview, applicants were more likely to agree/strongly agree about feeling prepared to interview for fellowship programs (78% versus 48%, $p=0.03$), and were more likely to agree/strongly agree about feeling comfortable with the virtual-style interview (83% versus 26%, $p=0.0001$). 93% agreed/strongly agreed that the interview helped identify strengths or weaknesses, and all participants agreed/strongly agreed the mock interview enhanced their confidence.

Conclusion: The mock virtual interview is an effective tool in preparing residents applying to cardiovascular medicine fellowship. Our initiative also provided a novel opportunity for mentorship of traditionally underrepresented populations in cardiology including women, foreign medical graduates, and non-white applicants. These benefits may occur regardless of virtual or in person interview setting and should be further explored.