The Transformation of Residency Recruitment in the era of COVID-19: Optimizing Residency Recruitment for Lehigh Valley Health Network

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The Transformation of Residency Recruitment In the Era of COVID-19: Optimizing Residency Recruitment for Lehigh Valley Health Network

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Background

- With the advent of COVID-19 in 2020, for the first time the residency program application process for 2020-2021 recommended all recruitment to be 100% virtual.[1]
- The Coalition for Physician Accountability recommended that all recruitment continue to be virtual for the 2021-2022 season.[2]
- Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) has 32 residency/fellowship programs. With the completion of LVHN's first year of virtual recruiting, this project examined the advantages and disadvantages of virtual recruiting and proposed recommendations for best recruiting practices for LVHN residency programs.

Problem Statement

Based on the experiences and insight of the virtual recruiting process by both medical student applicants and residency program administrators, a determination of the merits of virtual recruiting and best practices going forward is necessary to optimize residency recruitment at LVHN.

Methods

- A literature review investigated all elements of virtual residency recruitment.
- Background research included the application process and current recruitment recommendations.
- Data research included time and costs comparison of virtual versus in-person recruiting.
- Two surveys were developed and distributed to LVHN residency and fellowship program administrators and to USF medical students applying to residencies.

REFERENECES

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Results

LITERATURE REVIEW: TOTAL COSTS TO MEDICAL STUDENTS FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

Costs (dollars)	Description	Time period
$1,000. - $13,225.	Range of costs for MD residency interviews	2017-2019(3)
$4,000.	Median costs for MD residency interviews	2017-2019(3)
$1,000. - $5000.	Range of cost for 50% of students	2017(4)
>$5000.	Range of cost for 29% of students	2017(4)
$3,422.71	Average cost of MD residency interviews	2014-2015(5)
$6,930.00	Average cost of MD Neurosurgery residency interviews	2014-2015(5)

LITERATURE REVIEW: TOTAL COSTS TO MEDICAL STUDENTS FOR VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Item	Costs	Comments
Web Cam	No additional cost	Built into most computers
Microphone	No additional cost	Built into most computers
Ring light	$25.00	

LVHN SURVEY OF RESIDENCY AND FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND COORDINATORS

- 64 surveys were sent to all 32 LVHN residency and fellowship program directors and program coordinators.
- 29 (45%) responses were received.

SURVEY RESPONSES

- 29/29 (100%) programs offered only virtual interviews.

On a scale of 1 to 5, did you feel you were able to portray the program adequately on interview day?

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

14 (49%) · 9 (31%) · 3 (9%) · 3 (9%)

In your opinion, do you believe that virtual recruiting should be the standard for the future?

Yes 35% · No 24% · Unsure 41%

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LVHN SURVEY OF USF RESIDENCY APPLICANTS

- 169 surveys were sent to USF 4th year medical school students applying to residencies.
- 53 (31%) responses were received.

SURVEY RESPONSES

- 49 responders (92%) were only offered virtual interviews
- 4 responders (8%) were offered at least one in-person interview.

On a scale of 1 to 5, did you feel you were able to portray yourself adequately in the virtual interview?

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

26 (49%) · 17 (32%) · 8 (15%) · 2 (4%)

What was the best part of the virtual recruitment process?

Cost Savings · Convenience/comfort/time · More options for second looks

In your opinion, do you believe that virtual recruiting should be the standard for the future?

Yes 68% · No 13% · Unsure or hybrid 19%

Discussion

ADVANTAGES OF VIRTUAL RECRUITING

- Cost savings for both applicants and programs
- More efficient use of time, and flexibility of scheduling, for both applicants and programs.
- Reductions of bias toward lower economic applicants.
- Increased number of interviews offered and completed resulting in a larger and more diverse applicant pool.

DISADVANTAGES OF VIRTUAL RECRUITING

- Limits the applicant's opportunity to get a personal feel and fit for the residency program and surrounding area.
- Limits program;s assessment of the character, fit and interest of an applicant in their program.
- Inability of in-person "second look" for both the program and the applicant.
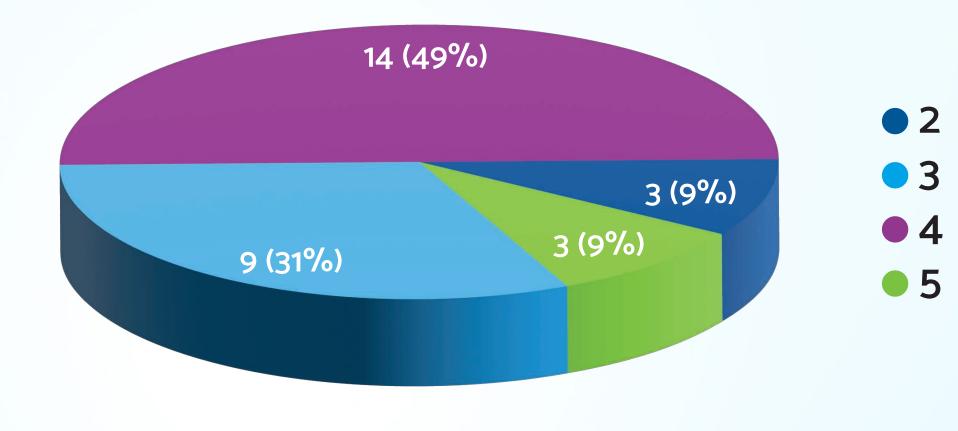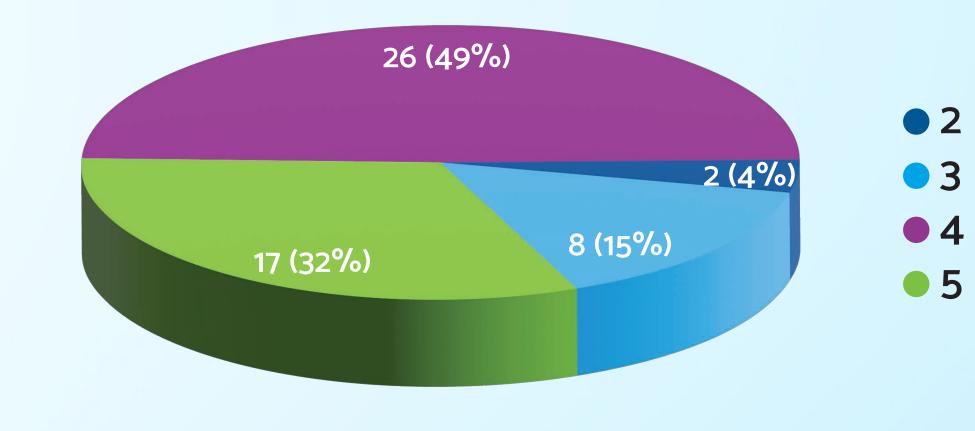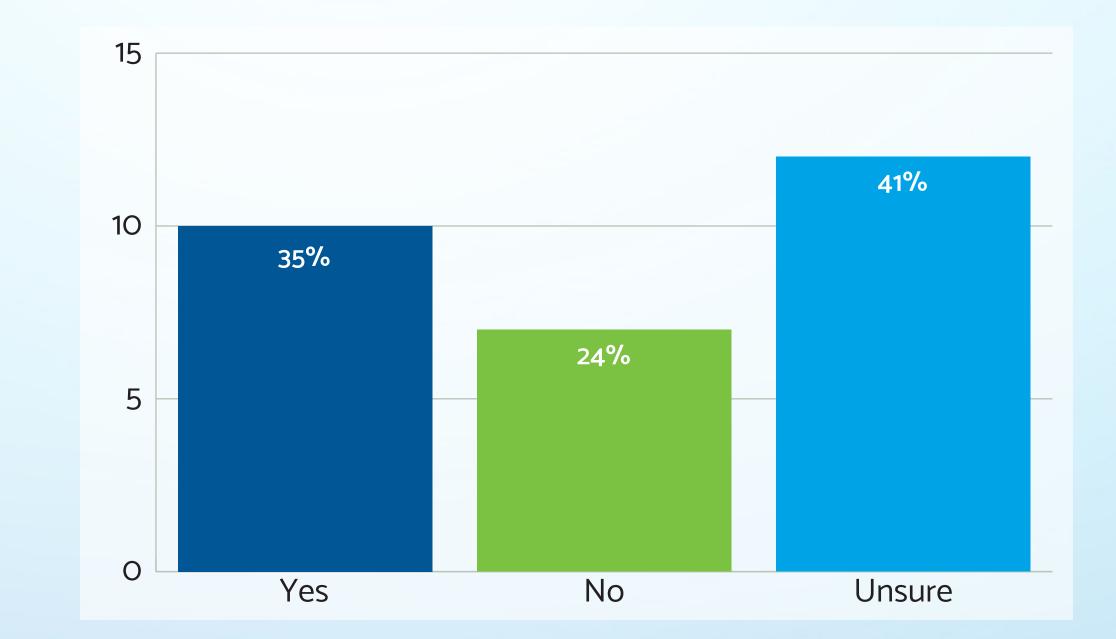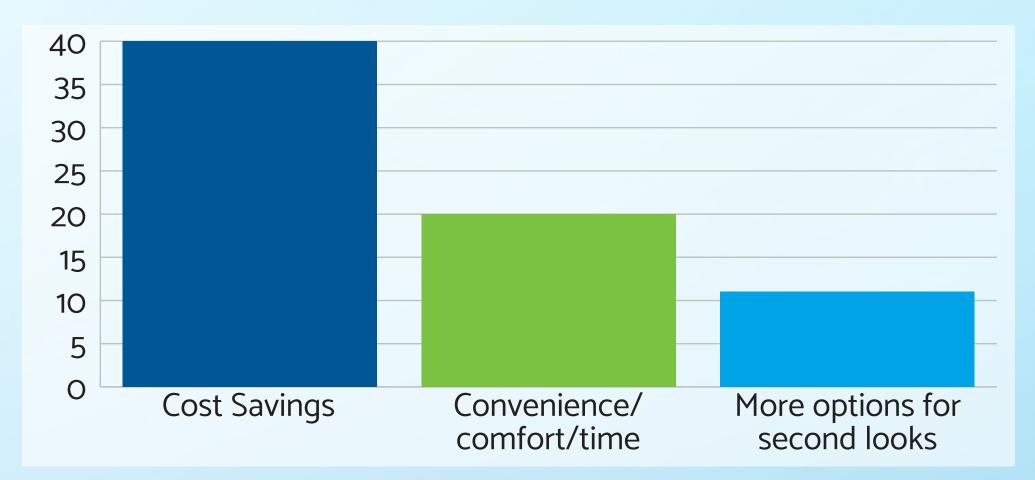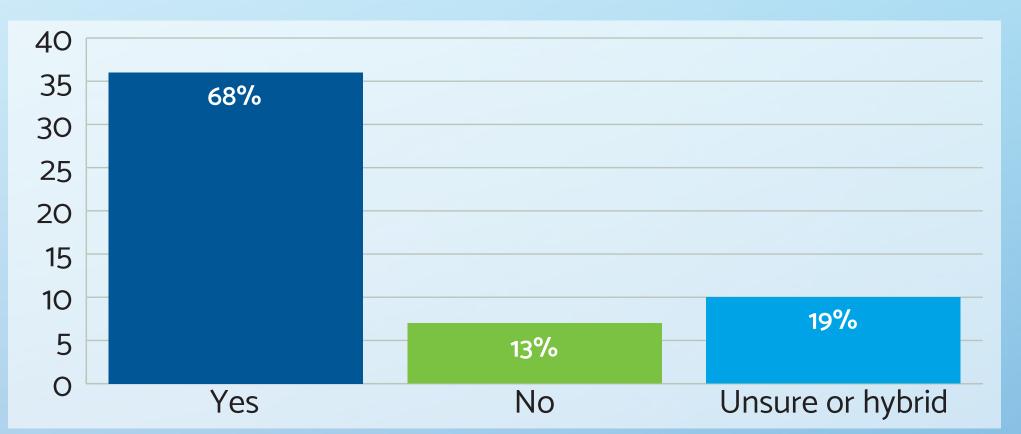
SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS FOR VIRTUAL RECRUITING

- Provide assistance to programs for improvement of web videos, video tours of hospital and surrounding areas, program-specific videos and yearly video updates.
- Develop virtual mechanisms to better assess applicant's interest, quality and character.
- Develop a fair process for "second looks" for both applicants and programs.
- Improve IT support for websites and interview process.

Conclusions

- Unforeseen consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic forced residency and fellowship programs to make the unprecedented change to virtual residency recruitment.
- With the significant savings in cost and time, the apparent reduction of bias, and the ability to interview a broader pool of applicants, the advantages of virtual recruiting far outweigh the disadvantages.
- Now it is time for LVHN and all residency programs to make virtual recruiting the standard of the future.
- This SELECT Capstone project allowed me to develop my leadership skills and be a future leader in the implementation of virtual recruiting.
- The results will be stronger applicants, better fits, and ultimately, the best trained doctors to serve the needs of their respective communities.

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