

Expectations Versus Reality: Understanding the Accuracy of Impressions Made During Virtual Interviews of Pediatric Pulmonary Fellowship Programs

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Abstract

Rationale: As a result of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, all pediatric pulmonary fellowship programs conducted virtual interviews for the first time in the Fall of 2020. This study aimed to understand the accuracy of virtual-interview derived-impressions of fellowship programs, as well as applicant preference for future fellowship interview cycles. **Methods:** A group of pediatric pulmonary fellows and Program Directors designed a REDCap survey. The survey was distributed to all first-year pediatric pulmonary fellows who participated in the 2020-2021 virtual interview season. **Results:** 23/52 (44%) of first-year pediatric pulmonary fellows completed the survey. 96% were able to form general impressions about fellowship programs during their virtual interviews. 96% reported that generally their fellowship experience matched their virtual-interview derived-impressions. 17 of 19 factors applicants use to rank programs had no statistically significant change ($p > 0.05$) in impression from virtual interview to fellowship experience. The two factors with a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change in impression were patient care related – volume of 'bread and butter' pediatric pulmonary patients and volume of tertiary care pediatric pulmonary patients. 87% prefer some form of in-person interview option in future application cycles. A tiered interview format in which applicants are first invited to a virtual interview day followed by an optional in-person second look day was the most popular preference for future interview cycles (48%). **Conclusions:** Virtual interviews may provide accurate representations of pediatric pulmonary fellowship programs and applicants prefer some type of in-person interview option in future application cycles.

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