

# How would you promote Interventional Radiology as a specialty in the modern era?

Somain Verma

Interventional Radiology (IR) is an important field. Through unique skills, an interventional radiologist can diagnose and treat a wide range of ailments, whilst being minimally invasive.

Unfortunately, there is a disparity between the increasing amount of IR procedures and the number of professionals entering the field (The Royal College of Radiologists, 2014). This can be attributed to many reasons; one being the apparent lack of exposure to students. One study of final year medical students demonstrated that 81.4% of students had no teaching on IR, and that 55.5% said that their knowledge on IR was weaker than that of other specialties (Atiiga, Drozd and Veettil, 2017). This, as well as my own experiences as a student, relays the lack of exposure to IR. This problem causes a limitation in interest development and pursuit of this career.

To promote IR as a specialty in the modern day I would target this issue. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) or Near Peer Assisted Learning (NPAL) offers the opportunity to be taught by senior students or clinical trainees. N/PAL can provide relevant content, allowing medical students to gain the exposure they sorely lack (Aba Alkhail, 2015). It has been demonstrated that N/PAL is a significant adjunct to the medical curricula; through this, interest and knowledge increases (Glynn, MacFarlane, Kelly et al, 2006).

At university, medical societies run courses and conference days. A viable proposal could be a student organised course for medical students who are interested in IR. Such a course could be held over a number of weeks, where recruited medical students can attend workshops and seminars ran by senior students and clinicians who are undertaking the speciality themselves. Having clinicians endorse the project may allow students to have a clinical role model that they can aspire to be, increasing the chance of following the path to IR (Wright, Wong and Newill, 1997).

Having clinicians give current advice on having a career in IR, as well as discussing the pathways involved would be beneficial for the students. Furthermore, teaching how to handle or use certain parts of the arsenal of the interventional radiologist could ignite a spark of passion within the students to pursue this field as a lifelong career. Sessions could be based around: what does IR involve, how to get involved with IR, practical IR sessions with training equipment, attending IR theatres and general radiology teaching. These would provide an opportunity not available through the medical curricula. Using social media, in addition to advertising through the university, there could be a large interest from medical students. Moreover, this course has the potential to be taught across medical schools in the country, allowing further outreach.

In conclusion, there is a rising number of IR procedures conducted within the NHS and this requires quelling by an increase in clinicians. This can be done through greater exposure and by facilitating a growth of interest in medical students early in their career with N/PAL involving doctors from the field.

## References

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