The New American Board of Radiology Core Examination: Exam Preparation Reflection Survey
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Background

• In 2013 the American Board of Radiology (ABR) replaced the written, physics, and oral examinations in diagnostic radiology with the new ABR Core and certifying examinations

• We surveyed radiology residents that took the ABR Core examination in 2014 after they received their exam results

• The purpose of this study is to determine resident study habits, to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of educational opportunities provided by residency programs, and the individual resources used by residents in their preparation for the Core examination
Background

• Why Change the exam structure
  • One reason is the phenomenon termed “Board Frenzy”
  • In the past, 4th year radiology residents were often given time off from clinical responsibilities to study for the oral examination
  • This led to staffing difficulties within radiology departments

• In 2012 the Association of Program Directors in Radiology (APDR) submitted an official position statement regarding time off for board preparation for the Core exam
  • “The APDR recommends no time off from clinical service” to prepare for the Core examination
  • Relief from call is at the, “discretion of program directors” (DeStigter et al. 2012)
Methods

• Invitations to participate in an online 13 question survey were sent out to diagnostic radiology programs listed in the National Resident Matching Program database.

• Participants were encouraged to forward the survey to known fourth-year residents that recently took the Core examination.

• The survey was administered after residents received the results of the 2014 Core examination.

• Questions covered topics that may influence exam preparation including:
  • Amount of internal board review
  • Amount of dedicated time off
  • Amount of time out of call schedule
  • Perceived effectiveness of commercial resources
  • Total cost incurred
Results

• Of the 1186 residents that took the Core examination in 2014, 92 (7.8%) responded to the survey. 89 of the residents that responded passed the Core exam.

• In 2014 91% of residents passed, 8% failed, 1% conditioned.

• 25 residents (34%) reported less than 20 hours of dedicated faculty led board review time
  • This group of residents reported more dedicated time off from service (greater than 28 days) than those residents that reported greater than 20 hours of board review ($p = .031$)

• 58 residents (63%) reported greater than 20 hours of dedicated board review time
  • This group of residents rated the effectiveness of the formalized educational activities within their residency training more highly than those residents with less than 20 hours of board review ($p = .004$)
Results

- Residents who spent greater than $2000 on review materials reported scoring higher on the exam (535 ± 84.08) than residents who spent less than $2000 (450.47 ± 96.16) as well as residents who were reimbursed by their program (517.39 ± 75.03) \( (p = .026) \)

- Review materials that were rated most effective by residents include Radprimer®, ABR Core Practice Exam, a dedicated physics review course, and the ACR Learning File/CPI modules
  - No statistical significance was found between them
Results

- 57.6% of residents reported some amount of dedicated time off from clinical service to study
- 21.7% of residents reported at least 4 weeks of dedicated time off to study
- The APDR recommends that residents not be given any dedicated time off from service to study for the Core examination
Results

• The amount of time off from call is highly variable between residency programs

• The APDR recommendation is for time out of the call schedule to be at the discretion of the program director
Conclusions

- Residents that reported less dedicated faculty led board review were given more time off of service for dedicated studying.
- Residents that reported more faculty led board review time rated the educational activities within their program highly.
- Residents that spent greater than $2000 on review materials scored highest on the exam.
- No single resource was universally favored howeverRadprimer®, the ABR Core Practice Exam, and several others were rated as most effective.
- Despite the APDR position statement that no residents be given dedicated time off, the majority of residents are given some amount of dedicated time off from clinical service.
- The number of days of relief from call given to residents is highly variable between residency programs.
Conclusions

• The residents that recently took the American Board of Radiology (ABR) Core Examination had few opportunities for feedback or advice in their preparation based on previous experience

• Surveys such as this one can be used by program directors to standardize educational activities based on resident experience to ensure robust and uniform Core exam preparation in the future
References


• Radiology TAB of. Initial Certification Diagnostic Radiology Exam Scoring and Results. Available at: http://www.theabr.org/ic-dr-sCore.