Shifting patients’ perception of radiologists as technologists to physicians

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Introduction

- Radiologists serve an integral role in proving health care, but reading with PACS often results in radiologists becoming less visible to patients and referring physicians.

- There are few studies directly addressing patient perceptions of the radiologists.

- It is important that radiologists educate patients further about the scope of radiology and the contributions of subspecialized radiology to their care.

- The support of patients and referring physicians is critical for radiology to continue to flourish as a specialty.
Purpose

• To assess our patients’ comprehension of the radiologist’s role in health care.

• To identify methods to improve patient understanding of radiologists and their role.
Methods

• Prospective single institution survey was administered to patients “pre-education” in the main department radiology waiting room from 11/30/13 to 07/01/14.

• After implementation of educational techniques with a radiologist profile poster and an informational powerpoint displayed in the waiting room, a “post-education” survey was administered from 8/15/15 to 03/15/16.

• Surveys of less than 4 responses were excluded.

• Pearson Chi Square Exact test evaluated differences between “pre-education” and “post-education” surveys to identify changes in patients’ perceptions of radiologists.
• 477 “pre-education” and 333 “post-education” surveys.

• Gender and age matched groups.

• 271 (61.4 %) “pre-education” and 180 (58.7%) “post education” had a college degree or higher education.
Results

- 75 (35.7%) “pre-education” versus 158 (47.7%) “post education” (p < 0.002) patients believed that a radiologist was a doctor.

- 267 (56%) “pre-education” versus 161 (48.6%) “post-education” (p < 0.001) patients thought a radiologist was a technologist.
Results

What is the radiologist's primary responsibility?

- Take x-rays: P = 0.083
- Read x-rays: P = 0.004
- Treat a patient's illness: P = 0.586
- Other: P = 0.648
- Don't know: P = 0.511
- No response

Who formally interprets your x-ray, etc.?

- Radiologist: P = 0.490
- Surgeon: P = 0.845
- Family medicine, etc.: P = 0.778
- ER Doctor: P = 0.854
- Don't know: P = 1.00
- No response

* Adds up to more than 100% as some patients provided more than one answer
The majority of patients have a limited, often skewed concept of the radiologist’s role in health care.

Simple measures can aid in educating patients to improve perceptions locally.

Although education improves patient understanding of the radiologist’s role, there are persistent misconceptions.
Limitations

- Results are from a single academic institution, so results may vary with other practices and patient populations.

- A large portion of our patients were highly educated with a college degree or higher, which may underestimate expected results in a different population subset.

- Data from surveys was collected manually with written paper surveys.

  - Some patients did not complete the entirety of each survey.

  - Some patients selected multiple answers for questions where a single response was indicated.

  - Not all patients entering the waiting room were requested to complete the survey.
Further Inquiry

• Given the discrepancy between our findings and the limited amount of research available on the topic, additional evaluation with larger populations and multi-center studies are warranted.

• Further investigation could involve more extensive marketing and education campaigns as ours was restricted to a single general radiology department waiting room.
References


