How Competitive is the Canadian Diagnostic Radiology Residency Match? Application and Matching Trends from 1991-2014

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Purpose:
To evaluate application and matching trends in Canadian diagnostic radiology residency programs and to assess the relative competitiveness of radiology as a specialty.

Methods:
The Canadian Residency Matching Service Reports from 1991-2014 for Canadian graduates were used to extract: total residency positions and radiology residency positions; number of applicants to all specialties and to radiology; number of first choice radiology applicants; number of unmatched radiology positions; number of positions and applicants to each specialty. Ratios were calculated: radiology positions to applicants and first choice applicants; first choice radiology applicants to applicants for all specialties; training positions to applicants in each specialty. Data trends and correlation coefficients were analyzed.

Results:
The number of radiology residency positions offered has increased with a strong positive correlation (r=0.91, p<0.001), while the number of applicants increased with only a moderate positive correlation (r=0.49, p=0.03). Radiology was the most competitive in 1997, with a ratio of 0.32 positions/applicant. There was an increase of positions/applicant over time (decreasing competitiveness) (r=0.76, p<0.001) but no change in positions/first choice applicant (r=0.11, p=0.65). The highest percentage of applicants who ranked radiology as their first choice was in 2003 at 6.5% with a decrease in this percentage over time (r=-0.36, p=0.13). Radiology is moderately competitive for positions/overall applicants and very competitive for positions/first-choice applicants compared to other specialties.

Conclusion:
The number of radiology residency positions has increased while the number of applicants has not grown commensurately. The match was most competitive in 1997, and decreased in subsequent years. Possible reasons for declining interest in radiology include changes to the job market, reimbursement and work environment.