



Twitter Use by Anesthesiology Residency Applicants and Programs

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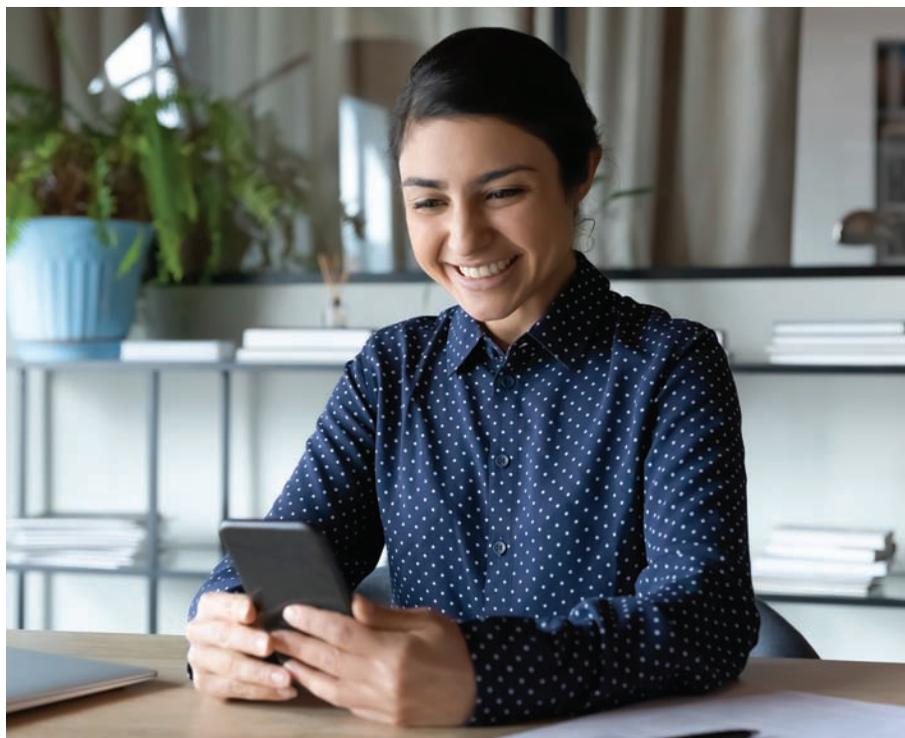
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The social media platform Twitter allows for the rapid sharing and collaborating of information and scientific advances in real time. Twitter is increasingly utilized by medical students, physicians, and residency programs to promote active learning, build professional community, initiate mentorship and sponsorship, and share academic and research developments (*Scrub-In* 2014;9:12-15; *MedEdPublish* 2019;8:7). The reach and inclusivity of Twitter provides both access and a voice to medical students to mitigate the barriers of medical hierarchy (*J Gen Intern Med* 2015;30:1673-80).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on students applying to anesthesiology residency, including loss of “audition rotations” or in some cases any anesthesiology rotations at all due to the need to preserve PPE and avoid travel. Twitter has evolved quickly as a community in which students network with programs, attend virtual events, and develop platforms for their professional interests (*MedEdPublish* 2020;9:178). The constant, though often asynchronous, discourse has allowed students to network with trainees and faculty at distant programs. This article is one such example of a Twitter-initiated connection of a third-year medical student, a residency program Director, and a vice chair of education.

Twitter offers instant dissemination of information and opportunities tailored to prospective applicants’ specific interests. For example, the ASA Town Hall “Impacts of COVID-19 on Medical Students” had over 800 registered attendees within weeks of publicizing. Twitter-based recruitment led to over 100 students engaging in an interactive preoperative call simulation with preceptors from nine different institutions, which was created by Dr. Amanda Xi of Massachusetts General Hospital. Requests from medical students collaborating on Twitter led to a national online Residency Program Virtual Open House program for prospective applicants, attracting over 90 individual sessions across the nation, and with increases daily.



With residency recruitment and interviews transforming into an entirely virtual landscape, both students and programs may see the coming application cycle as one in which both parties are disadvantaged. Twitter allows a program to showcase itself by presenting the cultural dynamics between attendings in the program or between programs at an institution. Resident and faculty achievements in research, teaching, and leadership can be highlighted. Resident “Day in the Life” posts describe what an applicant might expect should they come to the program. Importantly, Twitter can allow programs to support the inclusion and equity of minoritized candidates in both explicit and implicit ways. Current events can be addressed in real time when actively engaging with Twitter. The #BlackOutSTEM movement in June 2020 is one example. These nimble responses are of interest to prospective and current trainees (*MedEdPublish* 2020;9:178). Finally, the same things that recruit residents also may help to recruit faculty to the department.

Student networking with faculty by in-person conferences, residency fairs, or audition rotation has been severely curtailed. Twitter can amplify career development and provide the opportunity to gain

insight into the culture of programs for those who do not have the opportunity to observe or visit in person. Applicants may gain a sense of a program’s culture through resident or faculty tweets, even or especially those not relating to anesthesiology. A program may be active in advocacy as evidenced by departmental or institution-wide events or may openly value wellness and time with family. Twitter representation is a way to explore both the overt and the hidden curriculum of a program’s culture.

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The benefits of Twitter to a program extend beyond recruitment. Important advances in education and research are enhanced through posts and discussion. The community of practice unhindered by



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geographic location or time of day elevates the specialty as a whole. A program’s engagement in this type of platform can do more than demonstrate a diverse and inclusive culture in a department – it can drive it. Once the residents in a program know that their accomplishments will be disseminated in a wide forum, they may feel more supported.

While maintaining a high level of professionalism, use of this social media platform for aspiring anesthesiologists has proven to provide a multitude of benefits. The Twitter community of medical students (#MedStudentTwitter) has grown rapidly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as students discover the opportunities for networking with fellow students and faculty, resource utilization through source sharing, and collaboration on initiatives. Though launched as a social media platform, the virtual nature of this residency application cycle has transformed Twitter into a potential networking platform for professionals, resource and education hub, and recruitment tool that encourages transparency of intangible cultural aspects of an anesthesiology residency program. ■