
Volume 7 - Issue 1, 2007 - Country Focus: Radiology in Italy

Education and Training in Radiology: The Experience in Italy

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In Italy, there are thirty-eight universities to which students may apply in order to enter medical school. A very competitive admission test is obligatory in order to begin the six-year medical school training. In this period, medical students are exposed to radiology and related topics in several of their mandatory courses, namely: medical physics, diagnostic imaging, radiotherapy and medical oncology and neurological sciences. After successful completion of medical school and after a period of practical training, young doctors may apply for admission to one of the residential programmes, which is offered by the universities. Admission is based on the medical school curriculum of the candidates and on the results of a complex admission test whose characteristics are described on the following webpage: <http://scuole-specializzazione.miur.it/index.html>

Residency Programmes

Presently, all residency programmes in diagnostic and interventional radiology are four years long, although in the near future a five year residency programme will be implemented. The residency programme covers all main subspecialty fields of radiology and allows the resident to gain experience of both diagnostic and interventional aspects of the discipline. Special emphasis is given to teaching and discussing appropriateness criteria for diagnostic exams and interventional procedures. An in-depth study is devoted to radiobiology and radiation protection. No management course is provided during residency, as radiological education in Italy is mainly clinically oriented.

At the end of a very intense full-time programme, in which residents are required to rotate in all the different sections of their departments, they have to pass a final examination that includes the discussion of a thesis, which has the typical format of a scientific paper. After completion of the programme, all residents who have successfully passed the examination, can start working as certified radiologists in private practices, as well as in public and private hospitals and clinics

Continued Education

During the professional life of radiologists, there is no formal re-certification exam, but it is required that all radiologists, as any other medical professional in Italy, accumulate CME credits in order to prevent obsolescence of their professional knowledge. Overall, the radiological profession in Italy is enjoying a very good phase. Presently there is no evidence of radiological unemployment in Italy. The proportions of young and female radiologists are constantly increasing and due to the competitive access both to medical school and to residency programmes, the quality of new professionals is reaching a high standard of excellence. This may explain the very high number of abstracts submitted by Italian radiologists to the ECR 2007, that successfully passed the peer-review process. It is noteworthy that the number of Italian educational exhibits is second only to Spain, another country in which a very active radiological community is flourishing.

Another characteristic of Italian radiologists is their marked interest in e-learning, as a part of their continuing education. This is well-documented by the active participation of Italian radiologists in Eurorad, the e-learning initiative of the ESR, as authors, reviewers and readers. This highly merited teaching file database is accessible at the address: www.eurorad.org.

The Italian Society of Radiology (SIRM) is actively upgrading its systems to satisfy the growing requirements coming from its members in terms of innovative services. The SIRM website is constantly updated by Prof. Biagio Merlino and his team, in order to provide, for example, all main official documents produced by the society that may be needed in daily practice as well as for research purposes. A sample of this wealth of data

that is freely available, can be viewed at the address: <http://www.sirm.org/professione/lineeguida/On> the website, members of the scientific society may read issues of "La Radiologia Medica", downloading individual articles (written in Italian and English) as .pdf files and can gain access to many challenging "quiz" cases.

Published on : Thu, 1 Feb 2007