

Volume 13 - Issue 1, 2013 - Cover Story: The Job Market for Radiologists

Radiologists in Russia



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How many new radiologists graduate each year in Russia and what is the total number of radiologists already working there?

There are no official statistics for the number of new radiologists graduating each year. However, according to the number of teaching sites we can estimate that there are around 400-500 new radiologists annually.

Officially we have 14,000 radiologists (Ministry of Health, 2012) and about 1000 nuclear medicine specialists. Radiologists make up about six per cent of medical doctors in the country.

How many of the new graduates go on to find employment in Russia compared to the number that move abroad?

The number of radiologists moving abroad is not substantial, as due to our system of medical training Russian doctors need to enter a residency programme in order to become a radiologist in Western countries. Emigration of trained radiologists abroad is not a problem - only around 20-30 leave each year.

In terms of supply and demand, are there sufficient numbers of graduates and experienced radiologists in your country to fill the available posts? Does this fluctuate, and if so, has it been affected by cuts in healthcare spending?

Russia lacks radiologists who have been trained in multimodality imaging. Russian Ministry of Health reports list radiology as a medical specialty with a deficit of specialists. The ministry estimates that Russian healthcare lacks about 153,000 medical doctors. If six percent of doctors are radiologists, we can estimate that we need another 9000 radiology specialists. The lack of radiologists is mostly a problem for outpatient clinics and small hospitals in towns and villages. The main reason is the low salaries of radiologists and radiographers.

What is your strategy to attract and retain the best radiologists?

There is no state policy to attract and retain best specialists. Each hospital tries to solve this problem individually. Usually the most effective way is bonuses on top of the official salary for extra work. Most hospitals are permitted to perform examinations of patients from private insurance companies. Hospitals with modern and better diagnostic equipment have better chances to keep specialists.

Do sufficient numbers of radiologists enter a career in academic radiology in your country?

The number of radiologists entering academic radiology is low. Again, the main reason is low salaries.

Which is stronger in your country: public or private radiology? Are radiologists interested in a career in the public sector?

Russia has a state system of healthcare. Private medicine also exists. But public radiology is dominant. Most radiologists consider work in a private imaging centre as a second parttime job; they may not be sure that the position of full-time radiologist in a private centre is stable enough in the long run. Salaries in private imaging centres are usually higher than in the public sector.

Would you say there are sufficient numbers of native radiologists for the number of posts available (both public and private)? Are workers actively sought from abroad to fill empty posts?

Russia has a deficit of radiologists with modern training. The state healthcare system has bought a substantial number (in the hundreds) of new CT and MRI systems and lack of staff in radiology departments is an actual problem for many hospitals (in spite of the relatively large number of radiologists over 14,000). In spite of this migration of radiologists from neighbouring countries (like Belorussia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan) is negligible. It is probably related to the high costs of apartments, living in big cities and relatively low salaries.

How widespread is economic migration of radiological workers from Russia? Is it common that radiologists go abroad for educational opportunities and stay in their new host country for work?

Economic migration of radiologists to Western Europe and USA exists but it is not widespread. Mostly it is migration of young graduates from medical universities who are entering residency in radiology in the country chosen. Migration of trained and certified radiologists today is quite rare as they are required to enter a new five year programme of residency and be fluent in the local language.

What has been the impact of the global financial recession on medical imaging in Russia?

We have not been feeling the effects of the global financial recession on radiology in Russia. One of the major problems is poor management of radiology (for example, hospitals usually lack funds for maintenance and service of expensive diagnostic equipment, infrastructure of radiological departments is underdeveloped – most departments work without PACS). This results in lower productivity of radiology services. The system of training in radiology and continuous medical education is obsolete. Low salaries of radiologists and radiographers in the public sector are a real problem.

Has the government made any cuts that directly affect the medical imaging workforce, in the face of the financial crisis?

Officially no cuts have been made in the number of radiologists' positions in public hospitals.

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