

So you want to be ... a radiologist

Clinical radiologists are medical specialists who provide an imaging service to their patients. Imaging has been one of the most rapidly expanding specialties in recent years and offers an enormous variety of techniques and special interests.

A day in the life of a radiologist

Radiologists work closely with other clinical colleagues to provide a comprehensive diagnostic and therapeutic service. The typical working week of a general radiologist may include diagnosis and follow up of oncology patients, reporting trauma images, investigating gastrointestinal disease and gynaecological conditions. Specialists may also treat paediatric patients, diagnose neurological illness, analyse cardiac imaging and treat musculoskeletal disorders. Interventional radiologists may also perform a variety of imaging-guided procedures on both inpatients and outpatients.

Radiologists have a central role in planning patient management and complex cases are frequently discussed at multidisciplinary team meetings. Consultant radiologists also devote time to training, management, research and clinical governance responsibilities. Most consultants have on-call duties although computed tomography scans may be reported from home using teleradiology.

Training

Radiology attracts applicants from a range of specialties and remains a competitive specialty for entry at ST1. Training is conventionally delivered by supervised clinical sessions from a consultant and supplemented formal teaching sessions entirely within a clinical radiology department. Radiology academies also provide some

training away from a hospital environment using lectures, computer-based instruction and simulation training.

An award-winning web-based teaching tool (www.riti.org.uk) is available for all trainees which consists of over 750 bite-sized e-learning sessions. Since 2007, training numbers for a new academic training pathway have become available, offering opportunities for structured, protected academic development alongside clinical training.

The main themes of the curriculum are achieving core competencies (years 1–3) and the development of a special interest (years 4 and 5). Training may be extended to accommodate a sub-specialist interest or a period of research. Before achieving the certificate of completion of training, a trainee must complete the Fellowship of the Royal College of Radiologists examination.

The application process

To be eligible to apply for ST1 run-through training you must have spent no more than 18 months in clinical radiology. Since 2009 the recruitment process has become nationally administered in England and Wales. Applicants can apply for a maximum of two training schemes with a single application as part of this system. Interviews are still conducted at local deaneries but to a nationally prescribed template.

Is it for me?

As a diverse speciality with links to virtually all branches of clinical medicine, radiology offers enormous scope for developing a challenging career. No prior radiology experience is required although a realistic insight into the speciality and evidence of a commitment to a career in radiology are essential. This could include undertaking an audit, research, presentations or publications related to an imaging topic, or an intercalated BSc (some institutions offer a radiological sciences BSc). You could also do a relevant elective, spend 'taster weeks' in radiology and/or attend



multidisciplinary team meetings. Progress in postgraduate examinations should be commensurate with the stage of training.

As well as a broad clinical knowledge applicants are expected to have effective communications skills, be able to work as part of a multidisciplinary team, use creative approaches to problem solving and have an ability to prioritize workload. Those wishing to pursue an interventional career require an aptitude in visuo-spatial awareness, observational skills and dexterity. Applicants should not have any significant visual impairment. Trainees participate in an on-call rota which may be non-resident or full shift depending on the intensity of the work. The sessional nature of radiology makes it attractive to those considering less than full-time training.

Further information

There are a number of useful internet resources including those produced by the Royal College of Radiologists and the Society of Radiologists in Training which provide helpful advice and information on pursuing a career in radiology. [BJHM](#)

Conflict of interest: none.

KEY POINTS

- Radiology is a rapidly expanding speciality with a diverse range of special interests.
- Entry into radiology training is competitive and requires a broad skill set.
- Demonstration of a commitment to radiology is advantageous for applications.
- Training is well-structured with exams spread over 3 years.

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