

Overseas exams - Perception of audience in a conference symposium: A survey

Dear Sir,

There is an increasing trend for radiologists trained in India to attempt international exams. The ever-increasing number of preparatory courses conducted in India, which are dedicated to these exams, serves as a testimonial for the same. But clearing these exams is challenging due to difference in pattern of Indian exams compared to overseas exams, inadequate information regarding the method of preparation, large expenditure, and the need to travel overseas to take these exams.

We conducted a panel discussion on how and why to prepare for overseas exam during the State Annual Conference of Indian Radiological and Imaging Association (IRIA). Our panelists were Indian radiologists who had cleared one or more of international radiology exams and had experience working abroad (UK, USA, and Australia). Some of them were faculty in the Fellow of Royal College of Radiology (FRCR) training courses conducted in India. The discussion covered the common overseas exams, pattern of questions, required study material, the exam training courses in India and abroad, and the career prospects one can expect after having cleared these exams. Around 35 delegates attended the session.

At the start of the discussion, the participants were given a questionnaire [Figure 1]. The objective of the questionnaire was to identify the exams in which they were interested, the method of study, the reasons for interest in foreign exams, sources of information, and perceived difficulties during preparation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and 27 of them returned the questionnaire. Out of them, 17 (63%) were post graduate students and 10 (37%) were consultants. Twenty-two (84%) participants were interested in FRCR exam and seven (34%) in Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (FRANZCR) exam. Seven (34%) were interested in acquiring the degree of American Board of Radiology (ABR). Both consultants and post graduate students were more interested in the FRCR exam (consultants- 8/10, post graduates- 14/17). Majority (84%) read textbooks and solved (58%) multiple choice questions (MCQs). A third of the participants (8/27) used online material and attended specialized courses

in India. Very few attended [2 (8%)] overseas training courses. Majority (63%) was interested in only a short career overseas and wanted to return to India. Reasons for attempting foreign exams included job security in the future [4 (15%)], academic interest [19 (70%)], better

Academic workshop: How and why to prepare for the overseas exam

Questionnaire for delegates

Please tick more than one option if relevant

1. I am a postgraduate student/ consultant, if consultant post MD experience-
2. I would like to know more about FRCR/ FRANZCR/ USA/ Others. If others, please specify-
3. Your plan for foreign exam preparation mainly include
 - Reading textbooks
 - MCQ books
 - Online material, please specify.....
 - Specialised courses in India
 - Specialised courses in foreign countries
4. Please mention if you have already attempted/ partially cleared any foreign exam
5. Main reason for interest in foreign exams
 - Would like to settle abroad
 - Would like to work abroad for short term and return to India
 - Job security in future
 - Academic interest
 - Better financial prospects
 - For telereporting
6. Are you planning to do foreign fellowships - yes/ no, if yes, specify country of choice-....., sub specialty of choice-
7. Your main source of information regarding foreign exams and job opportunities- friends/ Internet / teachers/ other if other specify
8. What are the main factors that worry you regarding foreign education/job
 - Too expensive
 - Too difficult
 - May not be able to cope with new environment
 - Why take risk when good opportunities are available in India
 - Lack of reliable information and support
 - Others.....
9. a. Did today's programme meet your expectations (on a scale of 1 to 10).....
b. Did today's programme increase your knowledge regarding foreign exams/opportunities (on a scale of 1 to 10)-.....

Figure 1: The questionnaire used for the survey

financial prospects [5 (19%)] and telereporting [3 (11%)]. They obtained information regarding the exams from friends (56%), internet (48%), and teachers (33%). Overseas exams were perceived as an expensive affair by 12 (48%) and a difficult task by 5 (20%) participants. Eleven (44%) thought that the available information was inadequate and 4 (16%) perceived difficulty in coping with the new environment.

Based on this survey, the overwhelming majority of participants were interested in the UK-based FRCR exam. Also, it was interesting to note that most of the delegates wanted to return to India after a short career abroad. As expected, the motivations for attempting these exams were varied including academic interest and financial security. The majority were following textbooks rather than MCQ books for preparation. Similarly, only a third of the participants had attended specialized training courses. These were surprising in light of the fact that the FRCR exam itself is MCQ based and the practical exam follows a different model from the Indian system.

Some studies evaluating the candidates' experience of FRCR exam have been published.^[1] But no previous publication relating to exam preparation was found. Information obtained from this questionnaire-based survey is limited due to small sample size and may not represent

all India trends. But we hope that results obtained in this survey will be a preliminary guide to those interested in attempting the foreign exams and will act as a base for further discussions.

Jacob Therakathu, Shyamkumar N Keshava,
Pushpa B Thippeswamy,
Anuradha Chandramohan

Department of Radiodiagnosis, Christian Medical College,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India
E-mail: jacobther@yahoo.co.in

Reference

1. Yeung A, Booth TC, Jacob K, McCoubrie P, McKnight L. The FRCR 2B examination: A survey of candidate perceptions and experiences. Clin Radiol 2011;66:412-9.

| Access this article online | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Quick Response Code: | Website: www.ijri.org |
|  | DOI: 10.4103/0971-3026.155883 |