THE IMPACT OF A 10-YEAR MUSCULOSKELETAL ULTRASOUND TRAINING PROGRAM ON FORMER FELLOWS CLINICAL PRACTICE

Rafael Mendonça da Silva Chakr^{1,*}

1.Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre (RS), Brazil.

*Corresponding author: rchakr@hcpa.edu.br

BACKGROUND

Musculoskeletal ultrasound (MSKUS) training has become part of the rheumatology fellowship program worldwide. Our goal is to report the impact of a 10-year structured MSKUS training program on former fellows practice.

METHODS

In November 2020, all former fellows of a university hospital trained by the same professor between 2011 and 2020 were invited to participate in an anonymous survey, consisting of multiple-choice questions and 0–10 Likert scales (0 = nothing; 10 = very much). During the last year of the training program, all fellows were engaged in regular theoretical and practical adult MSKUS activities twice a week. The MSKUS teaching curriculum consisted of image optimization, ultrasound physics, identification of normal anatomy and pathologies with disease-specific findings via hands-on scanning of joints, and hands-on guided procedures/injections. Trainees were also encouraged to participate in the Brazilian Society of Rheumatology MSKUS training courses during their fellowship. For proportions comparisons, Fisher's exact test was used.

RESULTS

Out of the 25 rheumatologists invited, 20 responded to the questionnaire. In total, 55% had less than 5 years of post-fellowship practice, 90% dedicated more than half of their working hours to patient care and 10% were performing MSKUS regularly. For 55% of the respondents, there was at least one rheumatologist performing MSKUS in the same city. When asked how much MSKUS training during fellowship had contributed to improving their clinical practice, 75% answered ≥ 7 on a 0–10 scale. Clinical practice impact was neither associated with years after completing fellowship ($p = 1.000$) nor with the presence of another rheumatologist performing MSKUS locally ($p = 0.617$). Overall, 85% of rheumatologists agreed ≥ 7 on a 0–10 scale with the sentence "if the access to ultrasound machines was facilitated, I believe MSKUS could increase my earnings". That percentage was 60% among more experienced rheumatologists that lived in the same city as another rheumatologist performing MSKUS. Potential reimbursement increment was neither associated with years after completing fellowship ($p = 0.537$) nor with the presence of a rheumatologist performing MSKUS in the same city ($p = 0.218$). For 60% of former fellows, MSKUS training period should be increased from one to two years during fellowship.

CONCLUSION

Within 10 years of observation, in former fellows' perception, a curriculum-based MSKUS training program during rheumatology fellowship seems to improve subsequent patient care and could contribute to increasing earnings if ultrasound machine access was facilitated.

KEYWORDS

Ultrasound, Training, Fellowship.