Building a Remote Workforce in Academic Radiology

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Background: There is a critical physician workforce shortage in radiology, expected to worsen in the coming years. Additionally, today, a growing subset of radiologists prefers remote work; historically, academic departments have not permitted remote work at scale. These workforce issues have resulted in academic departments losing faculty to private practices that allow for remote work, further exacerbating workforce shortages in academic radiology.

Purpose: To develop a new workforce in academic Radiology that is both fully remote and invested in the tripartite academic mission, and to develop recommendations for doing so that are generalizable.

Methods: Successive tasks and measures over a four-year horizon include:
- *Year 1*: Further develop/recruit a remote workforce. This requires formulation of corresponding guidance (e.g., upper limit of remote faculty per subspecialty).
- *Year 2*: Designate an alliance of remote faculty and appoint a leader. The alliance will have representation in major Departmental committees – e.g., promotion and tenure, informatics, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and others.
- *Year 2*: Develop a roadmap to delineate expectations, including five principal domains: **1)** clinical productivity; **2)** education; **3)** scholarly activities; **4)** organizational stewardship and professional society involvement; **5)** promotion. Implement a business strategy to adopt remote work from critical access and rural hospitals.
- *Years 3-4*: Metrics for evaluation (yearly) will be mapped to the five principal domains, including: clinical productivity; teaching scores/evaluations; scholarly activities; stewardship and professional society involvement; and promotion.

Outcomes: Preliminary guidance was generated. We are growing our remote faculty group through both additional recruitment and allowance of transitions to remote work. As of July 1, 2023, there will be 7 fully remote radiologists at OSU. All remote radiologists work overnight or partial overnight shifts. Compensation and benefits are commensurate with daytime faculty. Four reside distant or out-of-state with respect to Columbus/OSU, and three are local, but are now permitted to work fully remotely. When the full cadre is active (July 1, 2023), a leader will be appointed, and the roadmap developed. To date, there are no major concerns regarding clinical productivity or teaching evaluations. All are Assistant Professors. Some, but not all, have engaged in significant organizational or external activities – examples include work in our DEI committee, and a collaboration with Columbus' coroner's office.

Discussion: Development of a remote, academic radiologist workforce is feasible and necessary to provide a new opportunity for workforce expansion. Guidance to inform recruitment and expectations will be critically important to ensure parity and stability. If successful, this new workforce will fundamentally change our academic radiology department. New ways of achieving the tripartite mission will be introduced, and geographic and other barriers to on-site work will be broken. The result will be a revised, modern concept of our departmental and organizational identity.

Summary: We are actively developing a remote academic workforce in radiology. The corresponding workforce model and framework, once developed, can be readily extrapolated to other fields in academic medicine, and may ultimately fundamentally change how a traditional academic department and organization is conceptualized.