Experience, Motivations, and Expectations of Adult Reconstruction Fellowship Applicants

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INTRODUCTION: The application and match processes for orthopaedic surgery fellowships are rigorous undertakings. As demand for total joint arthroplasty (TJA) is projected to increase, adult reconstruction (AR) fellowships have also gained popularity. We sought to investigate the demographics, educational background, TJA experience in residency, and motivations of those applying to an AR fellowship at an academic institution.

METHODS:
An anonymous web-based survey was developed and sent to orthopaedic AR fellowship applicants from the 2017-2019 cycles at single institution. Reminders were sent at days 2 and 4 after the initial invitation. The survey had 29 questions in various forms, including multiple choice, 7-point Likert scales, and ranked selections. Of 338 applicants, 220 completed the survey (65%).

RESULTS: The mean age of respondents was 31 years (28-40), 95.5% were male, 94% were US medical school graduates, and 26% had additional post-graduate degrees. Fifty percent trained at academic residencies, with 47% from hybrid and 13% from community programs. The majority expected to complete 100-200 primary total knee and 100-200 primary total hip arthroplasties (TKA and THAs) in residency and were most comfortable with the posterior THA approach. The most important motivations for pursuing fellowship in adult reconstruction were revision TJA experience, followed by primary TJA, marketability, anterior-based approaches experience, and navigation and robotics experience. Most had basic (74%) or no knowledge (23%) of billing and coding in TJA. In addition to abundant revision exposure, approachable attending surgeons and operative autonomy were factors affecting ranking of programs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:
Most applicants expected to complete 100-200 primary TKAs and THAs in residency. In our applicant pool, exposure to revision TJA was the highest priority in pursuing and ranking of fellowships. This information can be used to focus and guide training among fellowship programs.