

Retaining Radiologists Begins with a Warm Welcome

By Dana Hinesly

Recruiting new radiologists takes a lot of work, but signing the contract does not signal the end of the process. A few strategic moves can make new hires feel at home even before they set foot in the door.

"Prearrival contact is even more important than what you do once they arrive," said Lauren Krebs, radiology recruitment specialist for American Medical Recruiters, Ft Lauderdale, Fla. "Sometimes they don't start for months after they're hired. As soon as they sign the contract, somebody from the group had better be in touch with them, or they may not even start."

Reaching out can be as simple as monthly e-mails or phone calls. To ensure this takes place, Krebs recommends facilities assign each new radiologist a mentor.

"Offer to have dinner with them, maybe even host a cocktail party with the partners," she suggested, emphasizing that it is the thought that counts. "It doesn't have to be big, but doing something social provides a chance for the new radiologist to ask questions and for existing staff to get to know them as a person."

Viewing a recently hired radiologist as an individual—not just as the latest addition to the reading room—is a vital component of Krebs' plan to smoothly integrate new staff.

This can be particularly crucial for those who are relocating to accept the position or radiologists who are taking their first full-time job after completing a fellowship. The assigned mentor, along with radiology administration, should provide a wealth of information in advance of the first day on the job.

"You want to get them adapted to the community, so send Chamber of Commerce material and links to local government Web sites. Give them information on how to get a new driver's license or send lists of Realtors; tell them about professional organizations other doctors are a part of that they may want to join," Krebs said. "Find out what their hobbies are; for example, if somebody skis and they take a job in the Southwest, give them information about where can they still do things they enjoy."

Aside from earning a reputation as a friendly staff, there is a tangible reward for partnerships and departments making such efforts.

"What I hear a lot from radiologists I've placed is, 'I like the group, I like my job, but we are not happy here,'" Krebs said. "By not doing these things, practices and departments are risking turnover. This will help them with retention."

Putting Out the Welcome Mat

Neighborly behavior should continue once the new radiologist is on-site. A number of things should take place before a single study is reviewed, including a tour of the building, an orientation on how the health care facility operates, and introductions to radiology department staff, hospital administrators, and referring physicians.

"Yes, you hired them because there is a caseload for them to cover, but don't just throw them in a dark room and tell them to go start reading x-rays," Krebs said. "If you do that, 90 days later, they'll call us and say, 'This group seemed so friendly, but now nobody talks with me, I don't know where anything is, I don't feel like I'm part of the group ... take me out.'"

With that one phone call, the substantial investment a group or hospital has made in locating and recruiting is wasted.

"You want your doctor to feel comfortable so they want to stay," Krebs said. "Think of the things you take

for granted: where do they get their facility badges? Where do they park their car? Where is the break room? It is all so that they are not walking around feeling lost—and it has to start once they accept the offer, not when they walk through the door."

Normal Version