

CHALLENGES OF ACADEMIC RADIOLOGY CAREER:

The academic radiology career having many advantages over private radiology practice including better opportunity to excel in every area of radiology, can practice sub-speciality, supporting environment for evidence based and state of the art practice, institutional support to perform scholarly activities, increased chance of collaboration and sharing of ideas with colleagues, better opportunities for research and teaching along with leadership opportunities leads to national and international recognition. Beside all these advantages there are at least three challenges in the pathway of academic radiology career that can be faced by any new comer. These include (1) lower salary package with almost fifty percent less pay as compare to private practice, this difference might be higher in initial phase of career. There are at least 10 years required to reach the highest rank of academia that is professorship but in private practice only within 4-5 years you can achieve private partnership or established your own practice (2) less number of academic positions in contrast to private consultant posts. This is because of little number of teaching hospitals and large component of health services provided by non-academic centers. Because of recent major reform in health services structure by higher education commission Pakistan, new radiology centers recognized by college of physician and surgeons Pakistan and stringent measures taken by Pakistan medical and dental council now large number of academic positions are available in Pakistan and likely to grow in future, and (3) pressure to do more research and teaching without protected time. Academic radiologists are usually under pressure to behave more like private practitioners and work as a researcher or teacher. They are forced to act as service provider, spending proportionately more of each day on clinical service or revenue generation and less time during the workday for research and teaching. At the end of day only few hours left for academic work or you have to do at weekends, but many academic radiologists found that they had less energy remaining for scholarly activity in addition to their social responsibilities. Furthermore research is a continuous thinking process even your brain might be active on weekend's leads to more mental exertion as compare to clinical work which is more towards physical exertion. On the other hand academic growth depends mainly on your scholarly achievements like educational contribution, new innovations, number of publications, research grants etc for which you have limited time and resources in academic departments. As a result, many people originally join the academic radiology career by a genuine interest in research and teaching, and frustrated by increasing pressure to behave like private practitioners and decided to leave academic practice. In Pakistan the situation of academic radiology career is even worse because of increased burden of patients, shortage of manpower, financial constraints, poor academic radiology infrastructure and lack of vision among the speciality leaders. As a result frustration is common in academic radiologists and many are quitting the academic pathway with low priority of future academic radiology career by radiology residents.

In conclusion strong academic commitment is essential to join academic radiology career, and it should be assessed beforehand by employing authorities for those who are embarking on academic track. Furthermore chairs and head of radiology departments should encourage and support the radiologists having strong academic commitment.

Waseem Akhtar

Assistant Professor Radiology
The Aga Khan University Hospital
Karachi, Pakistan.
Tel. No: 34930051 Ext. 5606
E-mail: waseem.mirza@aku.edu