BACKGROUND

Neuro-ophthalmology is the practice of diagnosing and managing visual problems of neurologic origin.

Very few ophthalmology and neurology residents choose to pursue fellowship training in neuro-ophthalmology.

METHODS

Survey development
- Literature review regarding fellowship choice among neurology and ophthalmology residents
- Discussion with neurology faculty and program directors
- Generation of initial survey questions
- Pilot test the survey
- Refinement of survey questions

Survey
- Created and distributed online using Qualtrics (Yale)

Sample
- 15 residents - 6 PGY-3 and 9 PGY-4
- 6 fellows (graduated residency 2016)

RESULTS

- All residents and fellows reported that the value of the neuro-ophthalmologist for resident education and patient care was either very important or extremely important.
- 15 of 21 (71%) said that neuro-ophthalmology was more difficult than other neurology subspecialties.
- They identified the following issues as contributors to difficulty in the subspecialty:
  - Limited exposure (95%)
  - Not enough teaching (90.5%)
  - Ocular fundus examination (90.5%)
  - Complex diagnoses (90.5%)
- However, the following table indicates that very few residents selected neuro-ophthalmology as a rotation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much time did you spend on your neuro-ophthalmology rotation?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>52%</td>
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- 19 of 21 (90.5%) reported that a role model was important in their choice of a fellowship
- 13 of 15 (86.7%) said they would need more exposure to consider pursuing neuro-ophthalmology fellowship.
- 15 of 21 (71%) said that they would seek consultation by a neuro-ophthalmologist when they encounter patients with neuro-ophthalmic problems in their post-training practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Neurology residents:
- Perceive that neuro-ophthalmology is more difficult compared with other neurology subspecialties, all expressed because of limited exposure to the field and apprehension about ophthalmoscopy.
- Identify the influence of a role model/mentor as a major determining factor for fellowship selection.
- Perceive that the job market and compensation for neuro-ophthalmologists was favorable compared with other neurology subspecialties but even this is not sufficient to overcome the barriers that prevent entry into the field.
- Identified lack of exposure to the field as the major reason for not considering a career in the field. Most (75%) spend less than one week rotating in neuro-ophthalmology during their entire residency.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Explore whether mandatory neuro-ophthalmology rotations will increase residents going into the field and address workforce shortages.

Future studies could include:
- Conducting the same survey nationally among neurology residents
- Conducting a modified survey for ophthalmology residents across the US
- Conducting a national survey for board certified neurologists and ophthalmologists greater than five years out of training to assess perceptions about neuro-ophthalmology education during residency training

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to:
Janet Halfer, Ed.D. – Yale Teaching and Learning Center
Jeremy Moeller, M.D. – Yale Neurology
Yale Neurology Residents and Fellows
Valerie Biousse, M.D. – Emory University