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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Advancing Hybrid Interviewing: From Bias Concerns to Assessment Quality

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TO THE EDITOR:

Weidner *et al*'s article, "On Screen or On Site? Hybrid Interviews for Flexibility Without Added Bias," offers a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion about residency recruitment.[1] Their finding that hybrid interviewing, controlling for subinternship participation, does not introduce bias into rank lists, provides needed clarity at a moment when programs are under increasing pressure to balance equity, authenticity, and applicant autonomy.[2]

Their work also raises several conceptual questions that may shape how hybrid interviewing evolves. One question concerns the nature of interpersonal assessment across formats. Even when programs use structured questions and standardized rubrics, virtual and in-person conversations are not equivalent environments. Videoconferencing alters eye contact and nonverbal expression, which may influence how evaluators perceive relational or experiential qualities.[3] These differences do not inherently introduce bias, but they do change the conditions under which interpersonal judgments are formed. These conditions can affect the validity and reliability of holistic scoring.[4]

A second consideration is how individual interviewers interpret these environments. Interviewers who trained primarily in in-person settings (older generations) may rely more heavily on subtle in-room cues, whereas those accustomed to virtual communication (younger generations) may experience the formats as more similar. This variability suggests that mental alignment will become increasingly important. Programs may benefit from explicitly discussing how interview format shapes impressions with interview teams and from refining behavioral anchors to ensure that subjective qualities are interpreted consistently across interview formats.[5,6]

Finally, hybrid interviewing invites a broader reflection on what applicants and programs seek from the interview encounter. Applicants often value virtual formats for their accessibility and reduced burden.[7,8] They should also recognize the depth of connection that in-person visits can provide.[9] Programs should balance these preferences with their responsibility to evaluate applicants fairly and transparently. Weidner *et al*. demonstrate that hybrid structures can meet these goals[1]; the next step is to understand how to support interviewers in navigating the subtle interpersonal differences each format introduces. Programmatic assessment approaches such as longitudinal analysis of scoring patterns across in-person only (pre-pandemic), virtual only (pandemic), and hybrid interview (post-pandemic) formats may help ensure that evaluation remains consistent.[4,6]

Weidner *et al*. provide a strong foundation for this next phase of study. Their findings move the field beyond whether hybrid interviewing is fair to how to optimize it for future residency recruitment.

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