Specialty Status for Interventional Radiology: The Time is Now

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The rapid growth of interventional radiology (IR) during the past 20 years has led to the formation of IR societies in most European countries. However, in many European countries, IR is hampered by a lack of specialty status, which would allow it to determine its own future in terms of clinical practice, governance, training, and certification. In 2009, the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS) recognized IR as a distinct specialty of radiology. This landmark vote by the UEMS to recognize IR as a specialty has resulted in a number of European countries pursuing the same objective. Now is the time to seek specialty status for IR throughout Europe, within the house of radiology.

Internationally, specialty status for IR was achieved in the United States some years ago and, more recently, specialty status has been granted to IR in Canada. Specialty recognition for IR is now a truly global phenomenon, giving IR the opportunity to shape and control its own destiny. Appropriate training in IR, certification of training, and clinical practice are now a reality for IR. Specialty status also helps to highlight the

need for more IRs to allow safe and effective delivery of service, especially out of hours. This need must be met by increasing the quotas of dedicated IR trainees, which is difficult whilst IR is not recognized as a distinct specialty.

The Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe (CIRSE) together with the Interventional Radiology Division of Radiology at UEMS are working closely to pave the way for IR specialty recognition in all EU countries. Applications for specialty status must demonstrate that curriculum-based training and certification of training are in place. CIRSE has already introduced an IR curriculum (www.cirse.org/curriculum_syllabus), which has been adopted by many European countries as the training standard for IR. Training in IR, as in any other training program, should be certified to ensure that the trainee has reached a certain standard and is safe to practice IR. The European Board of Interventional Radiology (EBIR), which was developed by CIRSE in 2010 and endorsed by the ESR and the IR Division of the UEMS, is rapidly becoming adopted as the certification standard for European IRs (www.cirse.org/ebir).

Application for specialty status in IR occurs through the Medical Chamber or Council in each European country. CIRSE has published some general guidelines and directions on how to proceed with the application process on its website (www.cirse.org/specialtystatus).

CIRSE, together with the IR Division of Radiology at UEMS, encourages all National IR Societies to apply for IR specialty status, within the house of Radiology. Specialty status for IR throughout Europe will eventually allow harmonization of training and certification throughout Europe, which will enhance patient care and safety.

Conflict of interest Professor Michael J. Lee, Professor Anna-Maria Belli, Professor Elias Broutzos, Dr. Robert Morgan, and Professor Jim Reekers have no conflict of interest.

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