

What it's like to specialize in radiology: Shadowing Dr. Arogundade

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As a medical student, do you ever wonder what it's like to specialize in radiology? Meet Olaseni Arogundade, MD, a radiology specialist and a featured doctor in the AMA's "Shadow Me" Specialty Series, which offers advice directly from physicians about life in their specialties. Check out his insights to help determine whether a career in radiology might be a good fit for you.

The AMA Specialty Guide simplifies medical students' specialty selection process, highlights major specialties, details training information, and provides access to related association information. It is produced by FREIDA™, the AMA Residency & Fellowship Database®.

Learn more with the AMA about the medical specialty of radiology.

"Shadowing" Dr. Olaseni Arogundade



Specialty: Diagnostic radiology.



Practice setting: Hospital.

Employment type: Employed by a group practice in Central Washington affiliated with Confluence Health, which is a member of the AMA Health System Program that provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

Years in practice: Three.

A typical day and week in my practice: A typical day and week in my role as a radiologist are dynamic and multifaceted, encompassing a blend of diagnostic imaging reporting, image-guided procedures and interdisciplinary collaboration.

On a daily basis, I typically work nine-hour shifts, during which I spend about 80% of my time reporting on diagnostic imaging examinations. This involves meticulously analyzing a variety of imaging modalities, including X-rays, CT scans, MRIs and ultrasounds, to provide accurate and timely interpretations that aid in the diagnosis and treatment of patients.

In addition to diagnostic reporting, about 20% of my time is dedicated to performing image-guided procedures using fluoroscopy and ultrasound. These procedures allow for precise visualization and localization of anatomical structures, facilitating interventions, such as biopsies, fluid aspirations and injections, under real-time imaging guidance.

Beyond individual case responsibilities, I actively engage in interdisciplinary collaboration through weekly meetings with gastroenterologists, surgeons and interventional radiologists. These meetings serve as invaluable forums for discussing select cases, sharing insights and collectively formulating comprehensive management plans that optimize patient care outcomes. By fostering open communication and collaboration across specialties, we ensure that each patient receives personalized, evidence-based care tailored to their unique clinical needs.

Overall, my days and weeks as a radiologist are characterized by a dynamic balance of clinical responsibilities, procedural expertise and collaborative teamwork, all aimed at delivering high-quality patient care and advancing medical knowledge in the field of radiology.

The most challenging and rewarding aspects of radiology: The most challenging aspects of caring for patients in my specialty revolve around the high incidence of cancer cases and the emotional impact of delivering such diagnoses. Discovering worsening cancer burdens or new diagnoses as incidental findings during unrelated studies is always difficult, for both patients and their families.

Equally challenging is the responsibility to meticulously analyze images to avoid missing critical findings or misinterpreting exams, as any oversight can have serious consequences. Despite these



challenges, I remain committed to providing accurate diagnoses and supporting patients through their treatment journey with compassion and expertise.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a radiologist is our ability to directly influence patient-management decisions through our interpretations of imaging studies. Additionally, serving as trusted consultants to physicians and other health professionals enables us to contribute our expertise to multidisciplinary care teams, enhancing patient outcomes and fostering collaborative teamwork. These roles affirm the significant impact we have in patient care and underscore the intrinsic rewards of our profession.

The impact burnout has on radiology: It is significant, affecting both individual physicians and patient care. Radiologists face demanding workloads, long hours and the constant pressure to maintain accuracy, leading to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The repetitive nature of interpreting images, coupled with the emotional strain of diagnosing life-altering conditions such as cancer, exacerbates these challenges.

Burnout among radiologists compromises patient care quality, as it can lead to decreased job satisfaction, diminished productivity and an increased risk of medical errors. Moreover, burned-out radiologists may be less engaged in interdisciplinary collaboration and quality improvement initiatives, hindering efforts to optimize patient care pathways and outcomes.

How Confluence Health is reducing physician burnout: At Confluence Health, addressing physician burnout is a top priority, aligned with the organization's commitment to patient safety and quality care. Recognizing the challenges inherent in the specialty, our health system has implemented a robust framework to support radiologists and mitigate burnout.

One of the key strategies is a concerted effort to provide comprehensive support mechanisms. This includes constantly working to optimize staffing levels to lighten workloads and ensure that radiologists have the resources and time needed to deliver accurate and timely diagnoses. Additionally, the organization prioritizes ample vacation time to allow radiologists to recharge and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Moreover, Confluence Health has developed a comprehensive wellness program designed to promote the health and well-being of all staff, including radiologists. This program encompasses initiatives aimed at physical wellness, mental health and stress management, offering counseling services, mindfulness workshops, fitness programs and more.

How my lifestyle matches, or differs from, what I had envisioned: Radiology offers a unique level of flexibility that closely resembles what I envisioned during medical school. As a radiologist, I have



the autonomy to tailor my practice to align with my professional ambitions and personal priorities. This is the first job I have had since completing training, and I'm pleased to say that it has largely matched the lifestyle I envisioned.

Some of the most significant factors are the manageable schedule and the generous vacation time afforded to me in my current position. They allow me to maintain a healthy work-life balance, spending ample time with my spouse and two daughters. Additionally, I appreciate that I only work a few weekends per year and do not have any overnight shifts, which further enhances my ability to prioritize family time and personal pursuits.

While there are undoubtedly challenging moments in the field of radiology, overall, I believe that radiologists enjoy some of the best work-life balance among physician specialties. This balance enables me to pursue my professional goals while also nurturing my personal relationships and engaging in activities outside of work.

Skills every physician in training should have for radiology but won't be tested for on the board exam: The specialty of diagnostic radiology demands a unique set of skills beyond what may be tested on board exams, just a few of which I have outlined.

- **Adaptability and flexibility.** Radiologists must be adaptable to evolving technology and protocols in imaging. As modalities advance and new techniques emerge, radiologists need to swiftly integrate these changes into their practice to provide the highest standard of care. This adaptability ensures that they can effectively leverage the latest innovations to benefit patients.
- **Critical thinking.** Beyond simply interpreting images, radiologists must apply critical thinking skills to analyze complex cases and navigate diagnostic challenges. This involves synthesizing clinical information, considering differential diagnoses, and formulating appropriate management plans. Strong critical thinking abilities are essential for accurate diagnosis and optimal patient outcomes.
- **Team management.** Radiologists often work as part of interdisciplinary teams, collaborating with referring physicians, technologists and other health professionals. Effective team-management skills are crucial for facilitating communication, coordinating patient care and ensuring smooth workflow within the radiology department.
- **Imaging exam protocol design.** Radiologists play a role in designing imaging protocols to optimize diagnostic quality and minimize patient-radiation exposure. This requires a thorough understanding of imaging modalities, anatomy and pathology, as well as consideration of patient-specific factors. Radiologists must possess the expertise to design protocols that balance diagnostic efficacy with patient safety.

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One question physicians in training should ask themselves before pursuing radiology: One of them is: Can I cope with the limited patient contact inherent in this specialty?

As a diagnostic radiologist, the majority of your time is spent analyzing medical images rather than interacting directly with patients. While this can be intellectually stimulating and rewarding, it also means that you may have limited face-to-face interaction with patients compared with other medical specialties. Therefore, it's essential to consider whether you are comfortable with this aspect of the profession and whether you possess the interpersonal skills necessary to effectively communicate with referring physicians and other members of the health care team.

By reflecting on this question, aspiring physicians can gain insight into whether the specialty aligns with their professional interests, communication preferences and overall career goals. While diagnostic radiology offers numerous advantages, including diverse career opportunities and the ability to make a significant impact on patient care, it's crucial to weigh these benefits against the potential challenges associated with limited patient contact. Ultimately, asking yourself this question allows you to make informed decisions about your path and ensures that you pursue a specialty that aligns with your personal and professional values.

Books, podcasts or other resources every medical student interested in radiology should be reading:

Learning Radiology: Recognizing the Basics, by William Herring, MD. This book is an indispensable resource for medical students embarking on their radiology rotations. It offers a comprehensive overview of essential concepts and imaging techniques, providing a solid foundation for understanding radiological findings. Its clear and concise format makes it accessible to learners at all levels, and its relevance extends well into residency training, making it a must-read for anyone pursuing a career in radiology.

Radiopaedia.org. This website stands out as a premier platform for radiology education. This comprehensive online database offers a vast repository of radiological cases and resources, making it an invaluable tool for medical students seeking to deepen their understanding of radiological manifestations of diseases. Its user-friendly interface and extensive collection of cases make it an indispensable resource for learners at all stages of their medical training.



Additional advice I would give to students who are considering radiology: Gain early exposure through shadowing and rotations. Build strong foundations in anatomy and pathology and stay updated on technological advancements. Seek mentorship for guidance and insights and stay open-minded about subspecialties within radiology. Prioritize work-life balance and commit to lifelong learning for continued growth in the field.