Purpose/Objective(s): This study assessed radiation oncology residents’ needs and satisfaction in the PGY-1 year in the five radiation oncology programs in the province of Ontario, Canada.

Methods/Materials: In 2006, 58 radiation oncology residents (of 62) who had completed their PGY-1 year in Ontario and were either enrolled in or had graduated in 2006, were invited to participate in a 31-item anonymous web-based survey. The web-based questionnaire explored PGY-1 residents’ needs and satisfaction in four domains: clinical workload, faculty/learning environment, stress level, and discrimination/harassment. The Fisher’s Exact and Wilcoxon non-parametric tests were used to determine relationships between covariates (e.g. age, gender, residency year, university affiliation), items and summary scores.

Results: Of 58 eligible residents, 43 (75%) responded to the survey. Although eighty four percent of residents felt that their ward and call duties were appropriate, 21% thought the workload and number of patient management problems were excessive. Over 50% of respondents indicated that they often felt isolated from their radiation oncology program. Only 77% agreed that they received adequate feedback from the faculty, and only 40% felt that they had received sufficient counseling regarding career planning. However, more than 93% of respondents thought that full time faculty members had contributed significantly to their learning experience. Approximately 50% of residents experienced excessive stress or depression, and inadequate time for leisure or for reading the medical literature. Very few of the residents (less than 10%) indicated that they had been harassed or experienced discrimination related to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity / culture, disability, aboriginal status or religion. Eighty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that their PGY-1 experience had been outstanding.

Conclusions: Although most residents were satisfied with their PGY-1 training programs, more counseling by radiation oncology faculty members should be offered to help residents with career planning. First year residents might also benefit from more exposure to ‘radiation oncology’ and an introduction to stress management strategies to improve their well being during the PGY-1 year.

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