delusional radiology ...

Achievement check list for the new radiological technologist

Many places look to a resume for information regarding the particular radiological technologist. They want somebody that can perform diagnostic studies with as little supervision as possible. They want to make sure that this person knows what he/she is doing. The more you know, and the better you are at it, the more likely it will be that you will be hired. Here's a quick check list for you newbies to help advance your career in radiology.

Education:

[ ] Graduate from an accredited radiology program.

Only accredited programs from ARRT will let you sit for the boards. Those online programs are just going to take your money and run. Yeah, it'll give you a degree, but without the boards, you may as well get in line at the unemployment office. The boards are what matter the most

[ ] Pass ARRT board exams.

Once you graduate, you'll need to pass your boards. Relax, take a deep breath, and just go get it done. Yes, this is a test of the two (2) years you've spent in school. Yes, this is the test that will determine whether or not you can get a job. Don't think about that. The registry is designed to be "either you know it, or you don't". You know this stuff. You've been around it for two years. Relax, and get it done. Some places require you to be registered before employment. More and more places are going this way with the way that the job market has become lately. If you can find a place that will hire you with the understanding that you'll pass the boards within a year, take it, and take your time getting to the boards. I took my boards a year after graduating. I was barely passing class. I got a 92 on my boards without studying and with a hangover. My best advice: just relax.

[ ] Obtain any continuing education you can get.

Once you've passed your boards, you'll need to keep up on the new stuff on the market, as well as make sure you still know the other stuff. Get it done early. As early as possible. Don't wait. Don't put yourself on CE Probation. It sucks. Let me tell you from personal experience. It really sucks. There's many online CE sites that you can go to for your CE's. Just remember, ARRT now only accepts category "A" credits. Some places haven't caught up.

[ ] Cross train to what you want.

Some people are happy being an x-ray tech. some people want more. Don't kid yourself. If you want more, go get it. Whether it's classes or on the job training, do it.

Personality:

[ ] No matter what, the patient comes first.

I've seen too many people with the mind set of, "I'm off in 10 minutes, I can't do it". This is bad. Not only does this reflect poorly on you as a technologist, it reflects poorly on you as an individual. Nobody wants to work with somebody that doesn't want to help out. "I can't because I've got all this paperwork to take care of." Paperwork can wait, a patient can't. Now, that's not to say leave your paperwork for the end of the shift, but if there's an issue with a patient, the papers will still be there after the patient is taken care of.

[ ] Choose the patient over the doctor.

When performing your studies, listen to your patients. Don't be afraid to question the ordering physician. I can't tell you how many times I've been yelled at by an ordering physician because I wanted to make sure I was doing the correct examination. Know your studies. Know your patient. If they don't match, check with the radiologist or the ordering physician.

Employment:

Now, here's where you make your resume shine. I can faithfully say that I've done all of these, and I'm thinking of more to do. This list may get longer as I continue in my journey in radiology

[ ] Work for a Hospital.

There are so many things you'll see in a hospital that you won't see anywhere else. Biopsies, trauma, OR, the list keeps going.

[ ] Work for an Imaging Center.

Imaging centers tend to have more of a schedule to them. It's always good to have some sort of structure in what you do.

[ ] Use new equipment.

The newer equipment tends to be more accurate. It also tends to be easier to use. More facilities are getting the newer equipment either because it's time to update their stuff, or the old stuff is just not working properly.

[ ] Use old equipment.

Call me old fashioned, but I miss the days of the dials and buttons. I'm finding that new technologists like that phototimer too much. I've learned the hard way not to trust them. Especially with the new CR and DR equipment on the market, you can get some really

crappy images if phototime isn't used properly. I know it's used to reduce possible patient radiation exposure, but if you know your manual techniques, you'll never have an accidental underexposure repeat.

[ ] Work with any kind of positioning aid available.

They've really come out with some great positioning aids over the past couple years. If you have them, try them out. It may help you think "outside the box".

[ ] Work with no positioning aids.

Personally, I don't like them. One of my first hospitals was in Washington DC, where they had very little money to purchase "accessories". If you learn without them, you won't need them in the future. Don't get trapped trying to do a lumbar spine oblique with the 45^{o} sponge. When it goes missing, does your knowledge go with it?

[ ] Work day shift.

Day shift will give you the brunt of the work, but you'll also have the most help doing what you do best. More people come to the hospital for imaging procedures during the day shift.

[ ] Work evening shift.

Evening shift tends to be a slightly different world. There's less people around, less supervision, and sometimes fewer patients. Just remember, evening shift also means fewer people to help you if you get into a jam.

[ ] Work night shift.

Night shift, literally, is it's own little world. Many times, you are by yourself. Many night shift positions are multimodality positions, where you do x-ray and CT. You don't have any outpatients, but as you will find out, there is a "special" kind of patient that comes into the ER at about 2:00 AM. There's really no way to describe it, you have to see it for yourself.

[ ] Work weekends.

Weekends are typically a skeleton crew: just enough people to accomplish the work, with not enough help to go around. It's almost like the night shift, without the differential.

[ ] Take call.

Everybody needs to take call every once in a while. Not only for the fact that you're helping out your co-workers, but simply for the fact that you can be called in at any given time. It kind of tailors your lifestyle to the shift. I found that I don't party as much when I'm on call.

[ ] Learn as many computer systems as are available

In the wonderful world of computers, everything nowadays is all computerized. The more systems you're familiar with, the better off you'll be. It'll be easier to go from one system to the next, if you have a general idea about how they all work. The only way to know this, is to get your hands on a bunch of them.