Why RP? A Q&A with Dr. Michael Burke, Musculoskeletal Radiologist

Dr. Burke shares his journey into radiology and how RP has shaped the foundation of his career.

Dr. Michael Burke is a musculoskeletal radiologist in Chicago, Illinois, who serves as president of the local practice board and chief of musculoskeletal radiology (MSK). Outside of work, he enjoys hiking, especially in Tucson, Arizona, Hawaii and British Columbia; traveling to Germany, Switzerland and Belgium; watching and attending sporting events, particularly to cheer on his University of South Carolina Gamecocks; and spending time with family.

We talked to Dr. Burke to learn more about his career in radiology and why he joined Radiology Partners (RP).

Tell us why you got into radiology.

As I progressed through my clinical years of medical school, I noticed radiology played a crucial role in diagnosing and formulating a treatment plan for almost every patient. Nowhere was this more evident than during my trauma surgery and stroke neurology rotations. Realizing radiology's central role in the patient care process made me explore the discipline further. I realized then that radiology was the right fit for me. I enjoy analyzing patterns and working in a fast-paced environment. While much of what I do is behind the scenes, I know my efforts directly impact people's lives, which is rewarding

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and humbling.

Why did you choose MSK?

Alongside my twin brother, I was a competitive swimmer from an early age. During my sophomore season at the University of South Carolina, I incurred an injury requiring further MRI workup. As I was lying in the machine, I was nervous about what might be found and how long it would take to recover. Luckily, I never missed any competition. Looking back at the experience made me appreciate the care I received and the radiologist's role in coming to a diagnosis. This is why I enjoy musculoskeletal radiology as I can provide diagnostic expertise and care to athletes of all ability levels that complement the great work of my fellow orthopedic and sports medicine colleagues. In addition, I'm fascinated by anatomy and exercise physiology, so musculoskeletal radiology suits my interests quite well.

How did you connect to RP?

Transitioning from the structured world of medical school and post-graduate training to the "real world" was daunting. I knew nothing about private practice as I hadn't been exposed to anything outside of academic radiology. RP approached me and I interviewed with several practices. I decided to join Midwest Imaging Professionals in Chicago after finishing my fellowship in 2018. RP genuinely cared about finding employment that matched my interests and expertise and that has significantly shaped the foundation of my career and how I practice medicine. My goal from day one has been to reach my true potential as a radiologist and RP provides the environment and opportunities for me to make that a reality.

What excites you about RP?

At RP, it's more than viewing images and generating reports. The opportunities for leadership, advocacy and value creation are endless, which suits my personality well. I want to use my talents and abilities to further patient care and broadly transform the radiology landscape. I'm proud of how I built the musculoskeletal radiology section of our local practice by revising and adding new protocols, adopting structured reporting templates and introducing MSK ultrasound. I did this during my first year of employment and never heard, "You're a new radiologist; wait a few years then start taking on a project like this." Subsequently, as a local practice board member and practice president, I've seen firsthand RP's goals and aspirations take form. This would not happen without great people, which makes RP truly special. I'm particularly impressed with the accessibility and availability of regional and national executive leaders. They take a genuine interest in every radiologist and local practice. RP's leadership recognizes the only way to transform radiology is to do it as a team, which sets us up for an exciting future.

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What does the future of radiology look like to you and how will RP contribute to that?

First, the subspecialty model is here to stay. A robust remote reading capability will be key to providing timely subspecialty radiology care to healthcare consumers, particularly in small and rural markets. Now that nearly all physicians have completed a fellowship, it is good to have the ability to focus heavily on one's specialty, which is essential to recruiting and retaining key talent.

Also, medical imaging utilization is increasing and will continue to do so. This poses both challenges and opportunities. Quality cannot be compromised as the work grows, and physicians must be increasingly vigilant for signs of burnout and how they can be remedied should they arise. Apart from those challenges, RP has a unique position to handle and embrace more work. This will happen by realizing efficiencies and collaborative partnerships among local practices, investments in IT and initiatives to make it easier to practice. This will become more important if predicted physician shortages manifest over the next decade.

Finally, advocacy, advocacy, advocacy! During my residency at George Washington University, I saw firsthand how important a seat at the table was for radiologists and patients to be represented appropriately in government. Radiology is critical to the basic functioning of the healthcare delivery system in this country, improving and saving lives through screening and early detection programs. With innovative technologies and capabilities on the horizon, radiology will be a leader in revolutionizing healthcare. Government and regulatory support must be in place to make that future a reality.

Dr. Michael Burke earned his medical degree from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine; completed his residency in MSK at George Washington University; and completed his fellowship in MSK at Northwestern University.

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