Why RP? A Q&A with Dr. Anthony Toppins, Musculoskeletal Radiologist

Dr. Toppins shares his journey to MSK and RP and the bright future of radiology as an integral part of patient care.

Dr. Anthony Toppins is a musculoskeletal radiologist (MSK) in Dallas, Texas, where he serves as practice president of Radiology Partners Eagle. Outside of work, Dr. Toppins loves spending time with his wife, three children, their spouses and pets. He enjoys wake surfing, Sea-Doos, fishing and weekends at their family farm in rural East Texas.

We talked to Dr. Toppins to learn more about his career in radiology and why he joined RP.

Tell us about why you got into radiology.

I discovered my passion for radiology during my rotation in my third year of medical school. Initially, I had no idea what radiology was, but I was drawn to its intersection of technology, photography and medicine. This was a pivotal moment for me. I recognized the prospect of combining my interests with the significant role radiology plays in caring for nearly every patient, which solidified my decision to pursue a career in radiology.

Why did you choose MSK?

During one of my earlier rotations at a private community hospital, I had the privilege of working with a highly versatile general radiologist who shared valuable insights on diagnostic procedures, explaining the rationale behind specific tests, the selection of different imaging modalities (such as CT or MRI) and the considerations in opting for plain film versus ultrasound. Despite not being at a teaching hospital, his selfless commitment to educating a medical student in his personal time profoundly impacted me. At that time, I also encountered an interventional radiologist who demonstrated his subspecialty's hands-on, patient-centric approach.

Observing this contrast early on helped me appreciate the diversity within radiology. While initially leaning towards interventional due to a preference for patient interaction, I eventually found my niche in MSK. With its minor procedural aspect, MSK allowed me to engage with patients directly and perform treatments alongside diagnostic work. My early exposure to the spectrum of radiology subspecialties was pivotal in shaping my career path and instilled a passion for MSK.

How did you connect with RP?

I had recently transitioned from a previous role at Baylor in Dallas to join Dr. Byron Christie at Eagle Imaging when I met RP co-founders Rich Whitney, chairman and CEO, and Dr. Anthony Gabriel, president, through a mutual friend during the 2012 RSNA event. At that time, one radiologist was partnering with them, Dr. Nina Kottler. The concept they introduced, focusing on enhancing and revolutionizing radiology and their methodology in clinical medicine – scaling it, improving quality and implementing quality metrics – captivated me. In particular, I found inspiration in how they drew from concepts

in nephrology dialysis. The alignment of our visions and personal rapport led to the decision for Eagle to become the first practice to officially partner with RP in July 2013, marking the beginning of a collaborative journey.

What excites you about RP?

Some of the same things that excited me when I started my journey with RP still excite me today. Rich often uses a mountain analogy, illustrating RP's growth as ascending peaks, which resonates with me. A decade ago, we began at the mountain's base, and now, standing atop one peak, we realize taller peaks lie ahead. With radiology's changing landscape, RP is transitioning from rapid growth to focusing on clinical excellence and innovation.

As we adapt to the evolving terrain, I see opportunities for enhanced integration. Embracing our latest tech stack, RP Cloud Enterprise, our practice incorporated AI tools Aidoc and Rad AI, helping streamline our processes, automate impressions, and boost our capabilities. RP's unique position, grounded in scale and a robust IT platform, enables us to balance staffing with workflow demands and overcome hiring challenges. Radiologists across the country are facing increasing fatigue due to rising case volumes, and RP's commitment to minimizing fatigue underscores our dedication to radiologists' well-being.

Lastly, I'm thrilled with the quality of RP's radiologists and support teammates, coupled with a strong board and executive team, positioning us for the future. Amid challenging reimbursement dynamics, I'm pleased with RP's efforts to mitigate downward pressures, address issues and instigate positive change.

What does the future of radiology look

like to you and how will RP contribute to that?

The future of radiology is extremely promising. I actively encourage aspiring medical professionals to consider radiology as a rewarding career, citing its favorable combination of quality of life and income. Despite initial concerns about the field's viability, particularly with the rise of primary care, those predictions have proven unfounded, and radiology has flourished.

Similar concerns about AI replacing radiologists are emerging, but I firmly believe AI will enhance rather than replace radiologists. I envision a collaborative future where AI serves as a valuable tool, working alongside radiologists to enhance detection, improve clinical quality and address the escalating workload. While AI can offer a preliminary analysis, the critical role of radiologists in quality control remains indispensable. Technological advancements in our technology stack and AI capabilities contribute to this optimistic outlook. Further enhancements, such as improved voice-to-text functionality, are potential growth areas to reduce fatigue and enhance report generation efficiency. The evolving landscape, exemplified by innovations like Aidoc and Rad AI, reinforces my confidence in the field's future.

The demand for radiology continues to rise, with no signs of diminishing importance in patient care. Radiology's role remains integral, and I foresee its significance increasing rather than waning in the broader medical process. The future of radiology is bright, resilient and poised for continued relevance in the evolving healthcare landscape.

Dr. Tony Toppins earned his medical degree from the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine; completed his residency in diagnostic radiology at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, TX and completed his fellowship in MSK at University

of California San Diego.

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