



Why RP? Q&A with Dr. Timothy Diestelkamp, Neuroradiologist

Dr. Timothy Diestelkamp, neuroradiologist at Southwest Medical Imaging, discusses how RP's network of affiliated practices allowed him to find his perfect fit at RP - and how he is enabled to focus on patient care.

Dr. Timothy Diestelkamp is a remote neuroradiologist at Southwest Medical Imaging in Arizona. Outside of work, he and his wife enjoy exploring New York City, where they are based, with their rescue dog, Grace. They also enjoy traveling.

What inspired you to become a radiologist?

In medical school, I originally thought I wanted to go into orthopedics, but I found I was passing out in the operating room, so that was not what I wanted to do at all. The more I looked into radiology and the technology used, I found it interesting. The different applications of physics, a particular interest of mine, made me delve into it, and when I saw the day-to-day practice, I realized this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

What drew you to your subspecialty?

Neuroradiology was what I found most interesting as a medical student. I found the anatomy to be the most detailed and interesting to learn. Neuroanatomy tends to use a lot of CT and MRI, and I find the imaging exquisite. I wanted to see the pictures to learn what the different structures were, and I enjoyed the more I got involved. In neuroscience in medical school, there's an exercise called "where

is the lesion?" They'll tell you what the person's symptoms are, and based on that, you narrow down where you think the problem is in the entire central nervous system or peripheral nervous system. I found that to be an interesting part of neuroradiology. Now, when I'm taking a stroke code and the clinician explains the patient's symptoms, I'm able to narrow down the areas to look for stroke. I partner with the clinician to play the other half of the detective and tell them if I see anything, which I really enjoy.

Were there any specific experiences or individuals who influenced your decision to pursue this career?

In medical school, a couple radiologists mentored me and allowed me to shadow them. They helped teach me basic things, such as reading a chest x-ray. I was fortunate one of our anatomists was a physician, and he would do the imaging correlate. That's what really got me interested. I would be doing all my dissection and he'd show what it looked like on CT. He'd say, "This is what that is, this is what happens when it goes wrong, and this is what we see." It all made sense, and it really drew me in.

How did you connect with RP?

I had heard about RP from training and colleagues, and what initially made me interested was the flexibility and the number of options. I could express to RP what I was looking for in a job, and they were able to find matches close to that. Honestly, a big thing was geography, and being able to look across several practice sites and finding the fit that worked for me and my family was the first piece of the puzzle. RP was able to pull from different practices and say, "We have this, this, this and this; they're all slightly different, but they all hit your 1,2,3,4,5 on your checklist," which was great. When you're applying and already have a choice between your top three options or your requirements are already met, and you get to pick between the details, it made it so RP was the most flexible.

What excites you about RP? What is most fulfilling about working as a radiologist for RP?

What originally excited me was the flexibility. RP has so many different local practices, so I could find what was tailored to me. Now what I'm finding, especially being part of the practice, is that the tailored approach continues, and it's a lot deeper than I really understood when I was interviewing. We run our local practice and make decisions based on what works for us. It's individualized to what works for me as a radiologist and what works for the practice I'm involved in. We get to find what works best for us.

What are some of the unique features RP offers that are hard to find elsewhere?

What I've been most surprised about is how effective the support teams are. I don't think I could ever make a request to make my job any easier. The onboarding process was incredibly simple. Now,

scheduling, making calls while I'm working, if a study needs something fixed – all of that is so easy. I'm astounded at how easy my minute-to-minute job is when it's just practicing radiology. Everything else is handled by our support teams. All I'm doing is looking at the images and creating a report, which allows me to be effective, efficient and focused – something I highly value. I have been incredibly impressed by that.

In addition, everyone was conducive to me starting and getting me up to speed: checking in with me, giving me feedback on how I'm doing, telling me the milestones we want and how that's going, developing a plan, staying in touch, etc. It doesn't feel like I'm out on an island. I work for a practice in Phoenix, and I live in New York City – so, literally, I live on an island. It would be easy for them to not ever reach out, just expect the work to get done and leave me on my own, but I've been impressed with how much, how well and how often they communicate to me. We work together, and even from thousands of miles away, it makes me feel like a team where we're all right next to each other working together. Also, being part of this team, you've got a myriad of people with different expertise, and we can all help each other, which is great.

Now that you are a practicing radiologist at RP, what are some of the misconceptions people might have about our practice?

There are definitely misconceptions. I was initially told “We have a whole crew who finds the doctor you need to talk to, makes your life easy, tracks down the tech to get the correct images sent and does all the legwork, so you can spend your time being the radiologist and making your time efficient.” That was great to hear, but I didn't necessarily expect it, and now that's exactly what I have. I had this conception of getting told the pitch or ideal scenario, and I didn't realize how true that would be to my actual experience. It makes me happy to work here with that kind of support.

What does the future of radiology look like to you? How will RP contribute to creating that future?

Radiology is a prominent part of medicine, while it was traditionally thought of as an auxiliary part of medicine. As a physician, you learn to take your history, do your physical exam, diagnose and treat. Radiology is intertwined between each of those steps and becoming an even more integral part of that entire chain of events. Personally, I think the future of radiology hinges on getting medical schools and medical students to know that radiology is that involved in the continuum of care. Ideally, getting radiology more integrated in medical school curriculum can help people become more familiar and make it more tactile.

Dr. Timothy Diestelkamp completed his medical degree at Rowan University, residency at Westchester Medical Center and fellowship in neuroradiology at Mount Sinai Hospital.

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