

Impact of Virtual Site Visits on Programmatic Accreditation for Sonography Programs in the US¹

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of accountability when performing virtual site visits for programmatic accreditation of diagnostic medical sonography educational programs in the United States.

Review of the Literature

Although there is an abundance of research available on the validity and the essential components of programmatic and institutional accreditation, there was a scarcity of information found in the literature on using the virtual site visit method.

According to McEwan & Walsh², the possibility of implementing a virtual site visit using technology-enhanced conferencing tools for the accreditation process can be equally effective and efficient but far less costly than an on-site visit.

Description of the Study

- The study followed a mixed method, quasi-experimental design
- Independent variable: virtual site visits
- Dependent variable: site visit outcomes, including the number of citations, level of the citations and recommendation for continuing accreditation
- Control group: on-site visits
- Treatment group: virtual visits

Research Question 1

How does the effectiveness of having a virtual site visit for programmatic accreditation in diagnostic medical sonography education in the United States differ from traditional on-site visits?

Ho1. There will be no difference in diagnostic medical sonography programmatic accreditation effectiveness in the United States when performing a virtual site visit.

On-site and Virtual Visits for Number of Citations

- A total of 109 programs had an on-site visit for their continuing accreditation and served as the control group. The treatment group was comprised of 28 programs having a virtual site visit for their continuing accreditation.
- Descriptive crosstabs compared frequencies of the number of citations among programs having a virtual site visit to programs having an on-site visit.

Independent Samples T-test for On-site and Virtual Visits by Number of Citations

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Lower	Upper
					Lower	Upper		
Number of Equal Citations	1.247	106	.219	-.022	-.402	.358	-.432	2.127
Equal Citations not awarded	1.288	63,300	.117	.821	.518	1.104	-.212	1.887

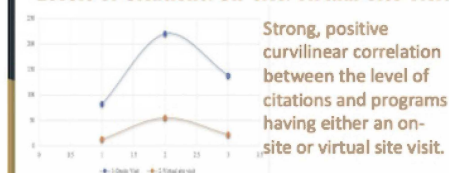
Results - There was no significant difference since the Sig. 2-tailed P values were greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was accepted.

Research Question 2

How does the level of the citations affect programs having a virtual site visit for programmatic accreditation in diagnostic medical sonography education differ from programs having a traditional on-site visit?

Ho2. There will be no difference in the level of the citations (Level 1 = low-level; Level 2 = mid-level; Level 3 = high-level) a program will receive when having a virtual site visit in comparison to programs having an on-site visit.

Pearson Correlation for the Levels of Citations/On-site/Virtual Site Visits



Research Question 3

Will virtual site visits impact the outcomes of programmatic accreditation?

Ho3. There will be no difference in the JRC-DMS recommendation to CAAHEP to accredit programs having a virtual site visit for programmatic accreditation in comparison to programs that have an on-site visit.

Will virtual site visits impact the outcomes for programmatic accreditation?

- Determined by the
- JRC-DMS Board of Directors' recommendation to CAAHEP
 - Review of the CAAHEP Award Letters

Results - All 28 programs having a virtual site visit were recommended to CAAHEP for continuing accreditation, and all were awarded continuing accreditation through CAAHEP

Null Hypothesis Accepted - There will be no difference in the JRC-DMS recommendation to CAAHEP to accredit programs having a virtual site visit for programmatic accreditation compared to programs with on-site visits.

Research Question 4

How do program directors feel about having a virtual site visit?

- Surveys - JRC-DMS Site Visit Questionnaire.
- Qualitative Constant Comparative Thematic Approach
- The overarching theme - the virtual site visit should be an option for programs because the process works well and is a cost-saving approach to programmatic accreditation.

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Ensuring the success of a virtual site visit also incorporated programs that had an electronic clinical management system, LMS, electronic student files and technologically savvy program faculty.
- Treatment fidelity was reduced since programs not meeting threshold outcomes on annual reports, programs on reactivation or on probation status, or had a formal complaint submitted through CAAHEP were excluded from this study.

Conclusions

Although no research studies were discovered in the literature review for this study that focuses on a virtual site visit for programmatic accreditation of educational programs in diagnostic medical sonography, these results concluded that the virtual site visit for continuing accreditation is just as effective as the traditional on-site visit.

Future Research

- With a larger sample size, a correlational study could measure the degree of association between programs experiencing a virtual site visit for initial accreditation and programs undergoing a virtual site visit for continuing accreditation.
- Investigation to identify cost savings to accreditation organizations and the programs seeking accreditation when implementing virtual instead of on-site visits.

References

1. Rienzo, C. E. (2021). The impact of virtual site visits on programmatic accreditation through the commission on accreditation of allied health education programs (CAAHEP) (Order No. 28768443). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2596028366). <https://libauth.purdueglobal.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/impact-virtual-site-visits-on-programmatic/docview/2596028366/se-2?accountid=34544>.
2. McEwan A, Walsh E Jr.: Virtual site visits: The future of institutional accreditation? In S. Barton, J. Hedberg & K. Suzuki (Eds.), Proceedings of Global Learn Asia Pacific 2011--Global Conference on Learning and Technology (pp. 605-612). Melbourne, Australia: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).