

"The Diagnostic Advantage": Why Radiologists Are Uniquely Positioned to Lead as Chief Medical Officers



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BACKGROUND / PURPOSE

- ▶ The CMO role in academic medical centers has evolved to encompass quality, safety, operations, informatics, faculty development, and system-wide integration.
- ▶ Radiologists are uniquely trained in pattern recognition, probabilistic thinking, and decision-making under uncertainty — skills directly applicable to executive leadership.
- ▶ Despite these competencies, radiologists are rarely recognized as natural candidates for the CMO role.
- ▶ This work examines how radiology training and practice align with — and strengthen — the core responsibilities of the academic CMO.

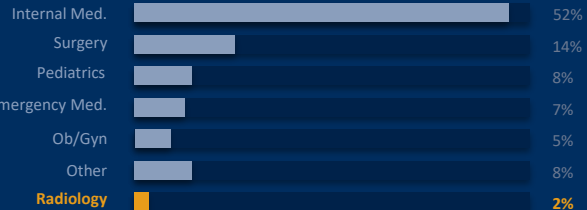
METHODS / MATERIALS

Descriptive, experience-informed analysis grounded in established characteristics of radiology practice and widely accepted expectations of the CMO role in academic medicine.

Core CMO domains examined: clinical quality & safety, operational performance, interdisciplinary collaboration, informatics governance, and strategic transformation.

EST. SPECIALTY BACKGROUND OF U.S. HEALTH SYSTEM CMOs

Source: Becker's Hospital Review 2023 (formal survey data limited)



▶ Radiology: ~2% of CMO roles despite alignment across ALL core domains

RESULTS

- ▶ Radiology training emphasizes pattern recognition and probabilistic reasoning — directly applicable to executive-level clinical judgment and enterprise risk management.
- ▶ Radiologists interface daily with every clinical specialty, nursing, administration, and IT — providing a systems-level perspective few other physicians possess.
- ▶ Academic radiology departments function as large-scale operational enterprises with measurable performance metrics: TAT, safety events, patient experience scores.
- ▶ Radiologists routinely balance clinical productivity with education, research, and innovation — mirroring the multidimensional portfolio of an academic CMO.
- ▶ Informatics fluency — including PACS, EHR integration, AI governance, and clinical decision support — is a native radiology competency, increasingly central to the CMO role.
- ▶ Radiology leaders regularly engage in quality improvement, peer review, and accreditation — a direct analog to CMO-level quality and safety oversight.
- ▶ Cross-specialty collaboration through tumor boards and multidisciplinary conferences positions radiologists as natural interdisciplinary leaders.

100%

of clinical specialties interface daily with radiology

54–72%

of radiologists report burnout — leadership quality is key

Every

core CMO domain aligns with a radiology training competency

CONCLUSION

- ▶ As health systems confront complexity, financial pressure, and rapid technological change, the CMO role demands leaders who can 'see the whole system' while maintaining clinical credibility.
- ▶ Radiologist expertise in data synthesis, operational leadership, informatics, and interdisciplinary collaboration positions them not merely as capable CMOs, but as strategic assets.
- ▶ Recognizing radiologists for executive leadership enhances their value and institutional impact across the academic healthcare enterprise.
- ▶ Intentional pathways for radiology-to-executive transitions should be developed at departmental, institutional, and national levels.

CMO DOMAINS VS. RADIOLOGY SKILLS

CMO Domain	Radiology Analog
Clinical Quality/Safety	Peer review, QA, accreditation
Operational Leadership	High-throughput dept.
Informatics Governance	PACS, EHR, AI, CDS fluency
Interdisciplinary Collab.	Tumor boards, multidisc.
Strategic Transformation	Research, education, innovation balance

BARRIERS TO RECOGNITION

- ▶ Radiologists are often perceived as 'behind the scenes' — limiting C-suite visibility
- ▶ Lack of formal executive training pipelines within radiology residency and fellowship programs
- ▶ Specialty-specific siloing reduces cross-departmental leadership exposure
- ▶ Historical undervaluation of diagnostic specialties in executive succession planning
- ▶ Absence of structured mentorship connecting radiologists to CMO career pathways

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Integrate executive leadership training into radiology residency and CME curricula
- ▶ Develop formal mentorship programs pairing radiologists with CMOs and C-suite executives
- ▶ Promote radiology leadership roles in hospital committees, QA, and informatics governance
- ▶ Advocate at ACR/AAMC level for radiologists in executive succession planning
- ▶ Document and publish case studies of radiologist CMOs to build a visible evidence base

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