

EARLY SURGICAL EXPOSURE FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS: EFFICACY AND EFFECT ON CHOICE OF ELECTIVES

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SURGERY

Background: Application rates to surgical residency programs are declining. The reasons are multifactorial, however early surgical exposure has been shown to increase application rates and decrease residency attrition rates. The objective is to evaluate the Surgical Exploration and Discovery (SEAD) program on its efficacy and influence on medical school electives.

Methods: Two online surveys were distributed to all students who participated in the SEAD program from 2016-2017. The surveys addressed demographics and prior surgical exposure, efficacy of the program, and the role of SEAD on influencing choice of electives. Univariate descriptive statistics were completed on all variables.

Results: 36 students participated (100% response rate). Most were males with a bachelor's degree, between the ages of 25 and 26, and had observed two surgical specialties prior to SEAD. Students reported that SEAD made them more likely to enter a surgical career (Mean: 4.1 out of 5, SD: 0.8), helped narrow down career options (Mean: 4.0, SD: 0.9), and improved comfort in the OR environment (Mean: 4.7, SD: 0.5). Most students were planning to, or had already, completed at least one surgical elective in second year (72.2%) and felt that the program will influence their choice of electives in fourth year (Mean: 4.0, SD: 0.6).

Conclusions: The SEAD program is an effective method to help students make surgical career decisions, offer early surgical exposure, and help with choice of medical electives. With a lack of early surgical exposure, declining interest in surgical programs, and increasing residency attrition rates, the SEAD program is a valuable addition to medical school education.