Research Electives

Surgery Research Electives

During the fourth year, opportunities exist for many varieties of advanced clinical or research experiences.

For the most up-to-date medical student research opportunities, please visit the Research page of the Department of Surgery website (https://surgery.wustl.edu/research/).

Section of Minimally Invasive Surgery
660 S. Euclid, Box 8109
Phone: 314-454-8877

Under the direction of L. Michael Brunt, MD, students may investigate minimally invasive gastrointestinal and hernia surgery. The minimum rotation length is four weeks. Under the auspices of the Section of Minimally Invasive Surgery and the Washington University Institute for Minimally Invasive Surgery, a number of surgeons are investigating outcomes of various minimally invasive surgical approaches to abdominal wall hernias, benign foregut disorders, bariatric surgery and cholecystectomy. Dr. Brunt is currently investigating the clinical outcomes and standardization of various laparoscopic surgical procedures, opioid prescribing patterns and opioid use in surgical patients, and education-related research and skills training for medical students planning to enter a surgical internship.

Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
660 S. Euclid, Box 8238
Phone: 314-747-0541

The Division of Plastic Surgery offers many opportunities for research projects on various topics related to plastic surgery. A project will be designed with students prior to their rotation on plastic surgery so that all of the materials and methods will be available at the beginning of the rotation. The basic science laboratories primarily investigate nerve injury and regeneration, including nerve transplantation. Students will be encouraged to design and complete their own research study during the elective. The minimum rotation length is six weeks.

The research rotation can be conducted in the plastic surgery laboratories under the direction of Drs. Moore, Snyder-Warwick, Wood or Mackinnon. Ongoing projects include the following:

- The influence of the immune system on nerve regeneration;
- Neural tissue engineering and regenerative medicine therapeutics, such as electrical stimulation to promote tissue regeneration
- The investigation of glial cells at the neuromuscular junction during development, maintenance, aging, and after nerve injury

Additional clinical and educational research opportunities in various fields of plastic surgery are available with Drs. Fox, Myckatyn, Patel, Tung, and Woo. These various projects include the following:

- In vivo tissue generation and tissue differentiation
- The mechanical, structural and biochemical effects of stress on scar tissue maturation
- In vivo anatomy of craniofacial deformities
- Outcome analysis of methods of cleft lip and palate management
- Breast reconstruction (3D imaging of breasts after cosmetic or reconstructive surgery, interpretation of angiograms of the breast to measure nipple perfusion)
- The use of nerve transfer to improve hand function in patients with cervical spinal cord injury/quadriplegia
- Surgical education (specifically web-based multimedia strategies for peripheral nerve surgery education)

The Department of Surgery can host Washington University medical students in any of its labs either to receive credit for a class they are currently enrolled in or to add them into the system as Washington University student employees to be paid for their time worked. Student work may be obtained through the Federal Work-Study program, the Office of Medical Student Research, or direct communication initiated by the student with faculty they wish to work alongside on specific subjects of interest with the goal of furthering their education. This can occur during any year of a medical student’s education.