

Make the most of that line on your CV

Medical student research output has increased quite dramatically in recent decades. Research projects are progressively being integrated into medical school curricula and students' drive to engage is becoming stronger as opportunities become more accessible. With a bit of effort, undergraduates might expect to get at least one publication by the time they qualify.

Often, the rationale behind us pursuing research is to decorate our curriculum vitae. Indeed, it can feel like there is a lot of pressure to do so. Although we will surely gain skills and experiences that will stand well to us from such an approach, pursuing research with the sole aim of gaining a publication can cause one to overlook why publications receive points on specialty applications in the first place. With slightly more consideration to what we want to do and why we want to do it, we can derive more from what is, undeniably, a limited opportunity requiring a great deal of personal initiative.

It is really important to carefully consider what is likely to be gained from a potential project in terms of skills and experiences and how these can translate to one's career progression. It may be that a student wishes to gain more experience in research methods or that they might like to develop their writing or presentation skills. Whatever the aim, different formats of research, including original research, literature reviews and case reports, will offer unique advantages. Similarly, the decision between joining a research team and leading a small project can influence the impact of the research, the student's responsibilities on the project and the length of time the research will take. The process of applying for research electives and scholarships presented in this edition's cover article is one systematic way of considering the issues.

Equally important as considering the technicalities of a project, is to maintain sight of the fact that research at medical school is an opportunity to cultivate interests and potentially make a substantial contribution to medicine.

At the start of the summer of 1921, Charles Best, a second year medical student, won a coin toss that earned him a summer research project examining canine pancreatic extracts. This of course, was the project that culminated in the discovery of insulin and *almost* a Nobel Prize for this industrious student. In the 1950s, Thomas Fogarty, still at school, worked part-time as an operating theatre technician. There, he noted a high mortality rate following embolectomies which, at the time, were performed with a forceps. Subsequently, as a medical student, he began developing a device that would minimise the invasiveness of the procedure. Lo and behold, by the time he qualified in 1960 he had produced his embolectomy catheter, the first minimally invasive surgical device. Patented in 1969, it remains the most widely used device for embolectomies worldwide. These are just two examples of a long tradition of outstanding medical student research. There are also many individuals whose initial work at university led them on to immense achievements further down the line.

The moment of qualification from medical school is the moment the medical student can empty their pockets of their stethoscope and pocket-friendly handbooks. They can finally appreciate the magnitude of five years of knowledge acquisition and practice in the degree of indentation their stethoscope has left on their trousers. With knowledge and stethoscope having migrated upwards to be inside their head or around their neck respectively, the student can finally take upon themselves the long awaited responsibility for patient care that has taken half a decade to achieve. In the research world on the other hand, the contributions can commence from the very beginning and sometimes, even before that. It also goes without saying that the experience of doing research has great potential to inform and shape a student's career. So, in a period of one's life where a new pair of chinos may seem a luxury, let us try to be seen to be wearing our finest research caps so that we may make the most of the opportunities that come our way.

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