Choosing Vascular Surgery in Medical School

Deciding on a field to pursue during medical school can take a great deal of soul-searching. For many, just deciding between a medical field and a surgical field alone can be difficult.

With increasing availability of "specialty" residencies, medical students are posed with the opportunity of entering directly into their chosen field without the need for fellowship training.

Learning About Vascular Surgery

Vascular surgery has recently become one of these fields with the 0+5 integrated program. Thus, the new challenge is for medical students to learn all they can about vascular surgery by the end of their third year in medical school.

I took on this challenge during medical school. Prior to my surgical clerkship, I had not been exposed to any aspect of vascular surgery, and so it was never a consideration.

Why I Chose Vascular Surgery

Once I saw a glimpse of the procedures and patient population in this field, I had that proverbial "epiphany" drawing me to this career. But a few bypasses and stents were not convincing enough.

The principle factors that motivated me to pursue vascular surgery were: having a mentor to support me, seeking out opportunities to experience all aspects of the field, and going to the SVS Annual Meeting to learn about the diverse career paths vascular surgeons have taken.

What Vascular Surgeons Do

If you think you may be interested in vascular surgery, the most important advice I can give is to really see and learn about what vascular surgeons do.
Unfortunately, either because of time constraints or organization within your medical school, students mainly see a few main operating room procedures, i.e. peripheral bypasses and aortic aneurysm repairs, and some endovascular procedures.

What You Need to Know

What students really need to learn and understand are: the breadth and depth of venous, arterial, and lymphatic pathology, the scope of treatments available, the role of the outpatient practice, the profile of the patient population, the influence of radiology, and the role of the vascular lab.

More Resources

There are many enthusiastic vascular surgeons, fellows, and residents across the country. If you have difficulty finding a mentor at your institution, do not become discouraged!

The SVS website is a great resource for networking and finding a mentor, and I encourage you to explore the possibilities of entering the field of vascular surgery.

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