



Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian
School of Medicine

Planning Your Summer

What will you do during the summer between your first and second year of medical school? The following info was organized by the Enrichment Office to assist first-year medical students with planning their “last free summer.”

Liability Coverage for Summer Activities

You may be asked to provide evidence of professional liability coverage by outside sites for summer activities. Liability coverage during the summer or for any extracurricular experience must be granted by the University unless the program is officially endorsed by Chobanian & Avedisian SOM (e.g., the Medical Student Summer Research Program). To request liability coverage, contact Student Affairs and provide the following: 1) name of the program; 2) description of the activity; 3) description of your specific role; and 4) the name of the faculty supervisor and contact information. This information will be forwarded to the Office of Risk Management for consideration.

Guidelines for Planning Your Summer

The following is a set of guidelines for first-year students planning the summer after their first year of medical school.

Start Planning in the Fall Semester: The planning process should begin in the fall semester of first year. Some deadlines for summer internships or research experiences are early January. Applications can be lengthy and may require letters of recommendation from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs; The Student Affairs Office requests two weeks of lead time for these letters. [How to Request a Letter of Recommendation.](#)

Consider the Big Picture: How will your summer plans contribute to your longterm goals? How will your plans impact your financial situation, your emotional needs, and your professional development? Do you need to earn money during the summer? Do you want to be near your family? Are you interested in undertaking research? Do you need to undertake military training (if you have a military scholarship)?

Search for Information: Once you have an idea of what you would like to do, start searching for information. The Internet is a good place to start. Here are some resources:

- [Medical Student Summer Research Program](#)
- [Directory of Medical Student Opportunities](#)
- [AAMC Clinical and Research Opportunities Database](#)
- [Global Health Summer Scholarship Program](#)

Talk to Someone: Discuss your summer plans with a dean in the Student Affairs Office, your AME, or peer advisor

Consult Careers in Medicine website (use your AAMC username and password (same as for the MCAT) to log in)

- Read [“What to do during summer vacation”](#)



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- Read [“Is a career-related experience between first and second year necessary to match?”](#)
- Read [NRMP® Program Director Survey](#) (outlines how residency program directors view research when evaluating candidates)

Common Myths and Realities of Planning Your Summer

The following addresses the common myths and realities encountered by first-year medical students planning the summer between their first and second year of medical school. If you require additional assistance regarding these issues, please speak to your SAO Dean or AME.

MYTH: This is your last “free time” in medical school.

REALITY: The eight weeks you have off after your first year will undoubtedly be difficult to find easily in the future. However, there are many opportunities during and after medical school to accomplish long-desired, delayed goals. You will have time in your fourth year (and in some cases up to twelve weeks of vacation time); although most students try to utilize this time to study for USMLE Step II and attend residency interviews, you may have time to undertake other experiences. You may consider an additional year of school to teach a class, experience global health work, or get an MPH or MBA – the possibilities are limitless. (Please be advised, extending your time at Chobanian & Avedisian SOM has financial and registration implications. Additionally, there are licensure implications when lengthening your time at the medical school, both in terms of the amount of time allowed between taking Step I and Step III and for the licensing boards themselves, i.e., any term of education longer than 4 years has to be explained by letter.)

MYTH: You have to do something “productive” for your dean’s letter to get a good residency.

REALITY: Your accomplishments in the summer between first and second year do not have a profound impact on your candidacy for residency. It is more important that you use the time in a way that is meaningful for you and enables you to get a better perspective on your future goals. You may decide to work on a community service project, travel, visit family, or read those novels you have been saving for a rainy day.

MYTH: Shadowing an MD is very helpful outside of the medical school experience.

REALITY: All of you will have an ICM experience that will expose you to a physician in a given discipline. By May of your first year you will not have the skills or resources to take it to the next step. Additional shadowing over the summer is most helpful if you are curious about a field of medicine that you will not be exposed to (i.e., dermatology, radiology, urology, orthopedics) until your fourth year. It does not help your candidacy for residency to have a simple shadowing experience. If you are thinking seriously about one of these fields, you should consider working on a research project with a mentor as these tend to be more competitive and students often need more than just additional “shadowing” to prove their level of interest.

MYTH: I need to do research to get into a good residency program.

REALITY: It is useful to complement your medical school experience with an introduction to research or a continuing research experience, but it is not a necessity. Many students match well in a variety of fields



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without prior research experience. However, it is clearly to your advantage to have research exposure if you are interested in a competitive sub-specialty such as orthopedics, urology, dermatology, etc. Many students may start research in one specialty and then change their minds once they have clinical exposure; this is not a problem since the continuity and perseverance to see a project through is more important than the topic itself. All students are encouraged to consider clinical or basic science research to enhance their education, especially if they have time off during the spring semester and thus may begin their projects then. The Medical Student Summer Research Program provides scholarships to first-year students who complete research at BUMC during the summer after their first year of medical school.

- See [NRMP® Program Director Survey](#) (use your AAMC username and password (same as for the MCAT) to log in) for more info on how residency program directors view research when evaluating candidates.

Curriculum Vitae (CV) Resources

- [CV Template](#) (provided by Student Affairs Office)
- [Academic Curriculum Vitae \(CV\) Example and Writing Tips](#)