

SHE CAN DO IT

Engage. Empower. Excel



ISSUE [NO.21] THE ROAD TO RESIDENCY: RCSI STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE



Released December, 2023. RCSI AWS Student Chapter presents 'She Can Do It' - a magazine dedicated to marginalised physicians who have made an impact in the world of medicine and surgery.

WELCOME

Hello SCDI readers!

We are so happy you're here.

The AWS team have created this bimonthly newsletter in hopes of bringing about a comforting, informative, and inspiring place for you to dive into different topics relating to the field of medicine. SCDI features a wide range of article styles, including information-led, opinion, and expert interviews. We also encourage submissions from you, our dear readers. Take advantage of this platform to share your perspectives and hone your writing and communication skills, which are crucial to being a great physician.

What's in store this month?

To help you optimise your chances in applying to whichever specialty you are considering or have always dreamed of, we interviewed RCSI Alumni who kindly offered their advice & insights into the various milestones that *almost every* medical student eventually goes through, and how to make the most out of them.

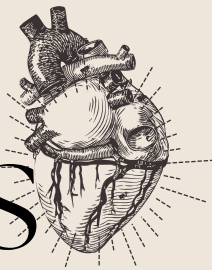
*Yours truly,
Linh, Laura, Sarima & Harnoor*

NEW CO-EDITOR

My name is Harnoor and I am from Toronto, Canada. I am in the foundation year of the Medicine program. My hobbies include photography, snowboarding, reading, and playing the drums. In terms of my future career, I have yet to decide on a speciality however, I am open to exploring all of my options. I'm very excited to be a part of the Association of Women Surgeons at RCSI as the Freshers Representative. Using my platform, I would like to further encourage the awareness of AWS among junior students while gaining a deep insight into the surgical field. I'm particularly excited to work on the SCDI Newsletter!



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THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS



A Successful Application:



Important Factors



It is truly never too early to begin familiarizing yourself with important components of a residency application.

Targeting the right qualities can make a huge difference.

What do our RCSI Alumni have to say when asked:

'In your own experience, what were the top 4 most important factors that led to your successful application to your specialty of choice?'

"It's hard to know what each individual program is looking for, or what about my application they ended up liking, but more broadly speaking I think it is important to present yourself as a well-rounded applicant. This means good grades / test scores / class centile, extra-curricular involvement (especially in the field to which you are applying) including leadership roles, research, and strong letters of recommendation. Ensuring your whole application is cohesive and fits with a common theme is important as well. You want to make sure each component contributes in some way to your theme. The core themes that I focused on were 'curiosity', 'dedication' and 'leadership'."

**-Clare Lambert,
Neurology, Yale University, USA.**



"US clinical experience, good board scores, meaningful extracurricular experiences, strong personal statement/interview."

**-Nicole Melchior,
General surgery,
St. Agnes, USA.**



- "1. I believe one of my biggest strengths is that many experiences on my application showcased my dedication to pediatric neurology. Choose extracurricular activities related to your future field that you are genuinely passionate about and can commit to long term. Try your best to do research work within your field and present a poster at a conference. Apply yourself on your rotations and you'll have meaningful patient experiences that you can also discuss during interviews.
2. US electives, I had one in pediatric surgery and pediatric neurology, and submitted three letters of references from these. Experience in the US healthcare system, networking while on electives, and strong letters of reference from attendings in my future field was extremely helpful.
3. I worked hard for my step scores, it is a variable that is a common denominator between all US match applicants. Start preparing early and focus on yourself and your goals.
4. Support – from my partner and close friends especially. Lean on your inner circle and be kind to yourself. It's a marathon, not a sprint!"

**-Desiree D'Souza, Child Neurology,
Children's National Washington DC.**



"I think it's hard to say what exactly led me to be here, since it was likely a combination of many things! Being very involved in med school was the most important thing to me – it gave me an outlet to pursue things that I was genuinely interested in (e.g. music soc, dance team), I made friends that way, and had lots to talk about during my interviews. Research is not for everyone, but I really loved the research I did, and I feel like that helped me get interview offers at more academic programs – which was something that I valued for my training. I think doing away rotations was hugely beneficial when it came time to apply to the match and for interviews."

**-Gabrielle Sanatani,
Paediatrics, University of
Colorado, USA.**

"To never know the word stress and to enjoy everything that you do! I have never known the word stress or at least very seldomly when I was in medical school up to now working with RCSI and clinically as a surgical SHO. This is because if something for example studying gets too much, I will stop and start on dinner or quite literally get ready for bed at 7.30pm especially now when it gets dark very early! Never think again that looking after yourself is a waste of time or not productive! I am happily being busy and hustling now just from well I am looking after myself! Never think you're not good enough. You are brilliant and well able for whatever that is you want to achieve! In plain words, don't hold yourself back when the world hasn't! So, ask, apply and fail only to try it again! Stay humble and eager to learn! Not just from the doctors and lecturers but from the nurses, hospital porters and even the canteen staff! I learnt so much from these amazing people as a medical student and even more now. From bettering my communication skills to practicing resilience, empathy and kindness, I gained these most from them! Family, family and family. I am nothing without them, they are my biggest support system and am eternally grateful for everything they have been for me, only God-Allah as my witness for my parents' sacrifices for myself and my sisters. Medical school is not your life, conversations with mom shouldn't just be about how difficult studying is but also about how she is and what we are wearing for EID! Life will happen in medical school. It is lovely when it is of happiness and excitement like your sister getting married or a ski trip to Austria during winter break but life also comes in sadness and grim when family members or yourself getting sick or even worse, bereavement. The other important factor that get me to where I am today is knowing that I am never alone for God- Allah is with me and there are many around you who want to lend their ear to listen and their shoulder for you to cry on, so never try to handle things yourself when life happens, let them help you 😊 "With every hardship, comes ease" - Quran 94:05"

**-Amira Amir,
General Surgery, Connolly Hospital, Ireland.**



How To Find Research in Medical School



Research is a crucial part of medical school and even much later in our careers. Medical practitioners who commit to lifelong learning are better equipped to keep up with the field as it evolves, incorporating discoveries and innovations into their practice.

Nevertheless, finding research can be challenging for many of us especially when we are merely starting out. We asked our RCSI Alumni: 'Do you personally enjoy doing research? What advice would you give medical students regarding finding research projects to get involved in?'

"There are so many projects going on in so many different facets of medicine that you should have no trouble finding something – all you need to do is ask. Attending research talks and getting involved with research focused extracurricular activities, like journal clubs, can be a good way to meet people that can connect you to a possible mentor. Another skill I obtained, prior to medical school, that helped me when it came to completing research projects, was having a basic understanding of how to do my own statistical analysis. An online course in basic biostatistics can go a long way because it allows you to take more ownership of your project and gives you a marketable skill. Being able to do stats ultimately opened a lot of doors for me in research."

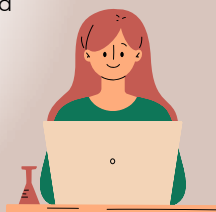
-Clare Lambert, Neurology, Yale University, USA.

"I personally do! But I also think that the kind of research we do as med students is not representative of what most research is like. My advice would be to reach out to many people in multiple different fields of research, even if it isn't your top choice, just to get initial experience. Once you have experience, you can reach out to people in a field you are interested in and are more likely to get taken on."

-Gabrielle Sanatani, Paediatrics, University of Colorado, USA.

"Overall, yes. As with anything there are parts of the research process I enjoy and parts that require more patience or motivation. Some fields such as pediatric neurology or surgery encourage applications to have research experience. Try to find a project that interests you and a supervisor who fits your learning style. RCSI has lots of wonderful opportunities to engage in research such as research summer school, and the Michael Garron Program. In your clinical years you can try and find projects on rotations. Presenting your work at an academic meeting is also an extremely rewarding experience and can involve traveling to somewhere exciting!"

-Desiree D'Souza, Child Neurology, Children's National Washington DC.



"I used to hate research, mainly because I did not understand and know how to do one. But now, I enjoy and am constantly doing one, bettering my research skills every time from the previous.

My biggest advice would be to speak to members of the team when you are on placements – SHO's or Registrars about research that you can help with. You can never start a research project yourself straight away. By helping your seniors with theirs you gain tips and skills that will help you working on your very own next year! Through these projects as well, you will identify people who would be good supervisors that can guide and teach you when you first start a project! You do not want a supervisor who leaves you to figure everything out yourself, you would want somebody who is enthusiastic about you gaining the research skills and being successful at your research project! Lastly, never think you are too busy with studies to be doing research! That was my mind set in medical school and I regretted it so much. We waste more time procrastinating when we only have to study but are so productive when we have a few things to work on! This will teach you good organization and multitasking skills."

-Amira Amir, General Surgery, Connolly Hospital, Ireland.



"I think it's important to choose research topics you're interested in to maximize the impact. If there is something you'd like to work on, reach out to someone who publishes a lot in that field. Take initiative and gain experience early. All experience is good experience, so if there is an opportunity in a field you're not super interested in, still take advantage of that. I think within RCSI there is a bias that you need to do research in the country you're hoping to work in ultimately. Looking back, I wish I did more research within RCSI/Ireland throughout the academic year. There are always opportunities available, don't wait for the perfect offer to land in front of you! Try to gain experience as much as possible."

-Nicole Melchior, General Surgery, St. Agnes, USA.

Importance of Mentorship in Medical School



What is mentorship?

Mentorship is described as **guidance** provided to a mentee by a person who is more experienced or knowledgeable in a specific area. They **encourage the professional development** of their mentee and nurture their growth throughout a period of time.

In the medical field, many of the students are **related to medicine** in some aspect.

Whether it be their parents, siblings or other family members. There is usually some tether to the field. This means that there is some guidance for how to **navigate** through medical school, clinical placements, electives and residency. This guidance is invaluable in medical school, however it is not a privilege that all students are accustomed to. That is why is it so **important to find mentorship** in the early years of training.

Where to find mentors?

Finding a mentor can be a **daunting task** for many. It may feel as though those who are highly experienced or well developed in their career are inaccessible.

However, mentorship can come from anywhere! It mustn't always be from someone directly related to medicine. The most important thing is to find someone who can **offer guidance** in addition to what they know about medicine.

So who can be a mentor?

- Lecturers
- Tutors
- Upper class years – SC1 and SC2
- Alumni who have graduated
- Family friends
- Anyone who you feel can offer you valuable guidance

1.

The **events** held in RCSI by societies and clubs are one of the best ways to **meet new people** and form connections. For example AWS holds a **Speed mentoring** event that allows students to have a one-on-one chat with surgeons and consultants. Many of the attendees have received **summer observerships** by attending the likes of these events.

2.

Academic tutorials led by SC1 and SC2 students are another great way to meet older years. These mentors are extremely helpful in guiding you through medical school. They provide **tips and tricks** that helped them while they were experiencing the same as you.

3.

Forming connections with lecturers: Making sure that you speak to and form connections with your professors can be really important in **standing out**. It helps **build rapport** with the very people who are training you to become future surgeons and doctors.

TRANSLATING HOBBIES INTO WORKPLACE SKILLS



We are encouraged time and time again throughout medical school to keep up our hobbies, echoing their importance not only for our mental wellbeing to be our best selves in the workplace, but also in nurturing our creativity, diverse skills, and innovative thinking. Check out our RCSI Alumni's responses to the question: 'What hobbies did you have in medical school? Did you talk about them in your interview(s)? How did they translate into workplace skills?'

"I only picked up tennis recently when I started working but wished I had started early in medical school- all for the fear of missing out on studies. But the one hobby I have and enjoyed as a medical student to now is cooking- I'm a good cook, not trying to brag at all- hahaha! I truly enjoy cooking, this may not be fine painting which would have been preferable for a hobby that could help with my fine motor skills for theatre but like I said surgery is only a part of my life. I cannot force myself into knitting just to have better surgical dexterity, so how do I talk about cooking in my interviews and not a chance will I leave it out!

So, I will mention how I enjoy cooking as a hobby. I am good at Asian cuisines and pastas! Cooking means organization, practice and perfection! Knowing what ingredients you need prior to cooking, means I am always thinking ahead and organizing my schedule between work to get these ingredients- and I am fussy about them, I go to wet markets and proper Asian markets to get my ingredients, so proper planning is always necessary. This is translatable to my workplace skills as I anticipate jobs early and ensure I am prepared for them. For example, when I was the cardiothoracic intern in Galway, I was on my own most of the time as the team would be in theatre and clinic. I would ensure that I anticipate any patient discharges or transfer early so that I can prepare letters ahead of time and not be busy on the day of discharge. I would also learn when my team would be on call, so that I can prepare admission notes and blood forms early. All of these help with efficiency of the team and minimizing chaos and mistakes.

Cooking also means I am eating home cooked, warm meals everyday. I always cook more so that I have lunch ready for the next day. To best look after my patients, I have to look after myself first. How does this benefit me at work? It means I am a candidate who will never settle for anything less than a good work life balance. I will make sure that wherever I'm applying for, for work, will allow me to do what I love and to look after myself first and that means I will never have to say I have no time to cook! Climbing up your career ladder, it is important to know what you want in life, being the best surgeon is what I dream of but being a happy and content surgeon is what I want and need so I'll only have that even though it means I will be a few years behind my colleagues!"

**-Amira Amir,
General Surgery, Connolly Hospital, Ireland.**

"Before going to medical school, I was a competitive athlete and throughout medical school fitness was a big part of my life. I enjoyed hiking, climbing, and cycling and got involved at a leadership level with each of those clubs at RCSI. I definitely talked a lot about fitness and athletics in my interviews – programs / employers want to know that you are well rounded and that you have a network of non-medical interests that will be able to sustain you during tough times in training. In terms of how this has translated into my skills as a neurologist – my hobbies have made me disciplined and served as a much-needed escape during long work weeks. After being a competitive athlete, where injury comes with the territory, I also became interested in neurorehabilitation which I anticipate will play a big role in my future career as a Neuroimmunologist."

**-Clare Lambert,
Neurology, Yale University, USA.**



"I had many hobbies (music, tap dancing, swimming/surfing, traveling, baking) and I talked about them non-stop in my interviews! I really enjoy music composition, so was involved in music soc from very early on in my time at RCSI. This was great as it gave me an opportunity to pursue and to talk about my hobby (music) AND gave me leadership/teamwork skills that are extremely transferrable to medicine. Same goes for dance team!"

**-Gabrielle Sanatani,
Paediatrics, University of Colorado, USA.**

"I got asked about hobbies in every single interview I had! I kept up with dance and yoga in medical school, and I also took up running during the pandemic. I became very invested in my houseplants, and I love to eat out and discovered some amazing bakeries and pastries in the city. I think having non-medical hobbies is crucial to your self-care, but also helps tell programs a little more about yourself as a well-rounded person. Athletic hobbies showcase resilience and teamwork, creative hobbies display your ingenuity, and ability to de-stress, and if you have a longitudinal hobby you have done for many years, it will be a good example of your commitment. Be yourself and that will come across, and help you match to a program that will be a good fit for your personality."

**-Desiree D'Souza
Child Neurology, Children's National Washington DC.**

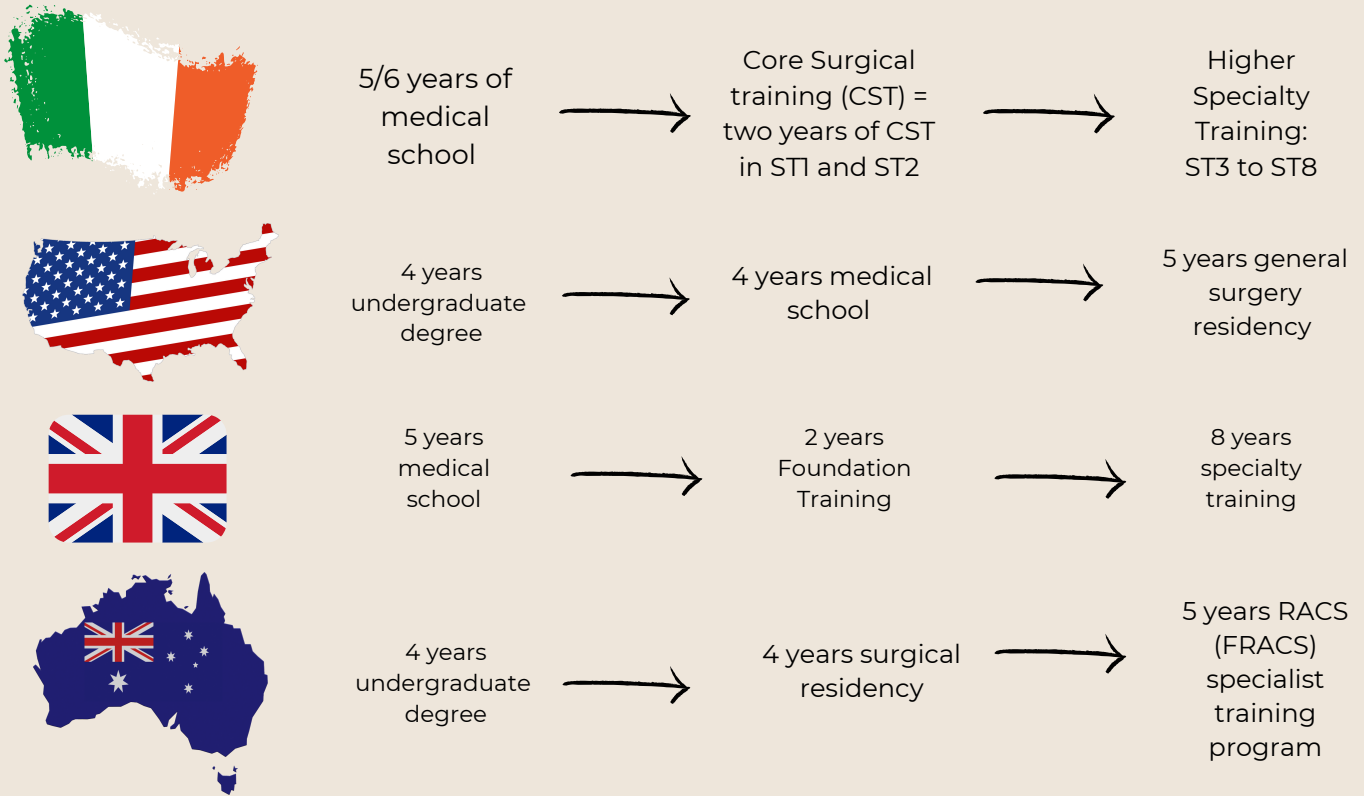


"My hobbies include running, working out, reading, baking and socializing with friends. I didn't talk about hobbies much in my interviews but I think it's important to show that you have hobbies that allow you to unwind from work and are feasible to continue as a resident. It's also important to show that you have hobbies with a social aspect to them/evidence of strong interpersonal skills in your CV. At the end of the day, medicine is about working with patients!"

**-Nicole Melchior
General Surgery, St. Agnes, USA.**

Training Abroad vs. Home

Pathways to become fully trained in a specific field differ rather starkly in Ireland vs other countries. The majority of students that graduate in Medicine from RCSI will be applying to either Ireland, the US, Australia or Canada. Outlined below are the basic stages to training to become a general surgeon:



'Are you completing your training in your home country or abroad? What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of that?'

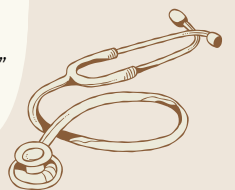


"I have no family or personal ties to the USA but the opportunity to pursue Neurology residency at Yale was too good an opportunity to pass up! That being said, living away from family and moving somewhere I've never been before was a bit scary, but I have totally fallen in love with New Haven and have created a great network of amazing people here. I believe training somewhere foreign pushes you to grow as a person."

**- Clare Lambert
Neurology, Yale University, USA.**

"...this is definitely the downside of completing training abroad, missing out on time with family. Advantages would be better training and healthcare system in Ireland. Familiarity with the healthcare system in Ireland as I studied here."

**- Dr Amira Amir, General Surgery,
Connolly Hospital, Ireland.**



"I'm Canadian and am completing my training in the US. Some advantages are that I get to live in a new city (and country), to have exposure and training in a whole new healthcare system, and to work at a large academic centre with lots of resources and research opportunities. The disadvantage is that moving to the US is logistically very hard!"

**- Gabrielle Sanatani, Paediatrics,
University of Colorado, USA.**

"I decided to train abroad in the US instead of Canada because of the number of opportunities I had here that fit my career goals. I wanted to train at a very large hospital that is internationally renowned... The US had over 70 child neurology programs, whereas Canada only had 1 program for IMG applicants. Although I had to write my US board exams and forge a new path than I expected, it was 100% worth it. One of the great advantages of going to RCSI is being exposed to many postgraduate training options besides your home country. I would encourage people to keep their options open and decide what best fits their goals."

**- Desiree D'Souza
Child Neurology, Children's National Washington DC.**

Optimizing your clinical experiences

CLINICAL PLACEMENT: HOW TO STAND OUT

In this article, we will outline some key tips on how to best get actively involved in your placements and make sure the days don't just pass you by with nothing gained!



1

Arrive early & with a plan

Fail to prepare and prepare to fail! Ensure to arrive at least 30 minutes early on your first day to allow time to find parking and figure out where you're supposed to be. It is imperative to have a plan with what you want to achieve in the week; For example, have a goal of how many patient histories you want to acquire and present each week as well as skills you want to learn or practice.

2

Introduce yourself

This one may sound obvious but it is so important not to be the shy medical student standing at the very back of every ward round! Remember, you deserve to be there! Introduce yourself to the team at the very beginning and let it be known that you are eager and willing to get stuck in wherever you are needed. You would be surprised how many interns would appreciate the extra hands!

3

Say yes to opportunities

Don't be afraid to get involved, even if you don't feel the most confident. If someone on the team offers you to go and do an ECG, instead of saying "I can't, I've never done one before", say something like "I've practised them in my clinical skills class, would it be okay if you observed me while I do it this first time?".

4

Ask questions and take advantage of teaching moments

The hospitals can be extremely busy and often the team won't have time to talk you through things. However, most are very enthusiastic to teach and happy to discuss particular patients or diseases in great detail, provided you catch them at the right time. Ask your questions whilst walking from ward to ward or in between patients during clinics for example!

Stress Management in Medical School

As we all know, medical school can be some of the most **challenging** and **stressful** years in our lives. There is a constant challenge to **balance school assignments, study, research, extracurriculars, social life or having a job**. As all these things build up in one's life there can come a time where we feel overwhelmed and under immense pressure. Having **good stress management methods** is key to maintaining one's mental and physical health in the early years of training.

In this article, we are going to outline what we believe to be **some of the best stress management tips**.



CREATING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

It may seem rudimentary, but making **friends or a partner you can rely on** during your years in medical school is one of the most important things you can achieve. Not only is it a personal want for many students, it actually proves to be **imperative for academics and decreasing the burden of work**.

For things such as **studying for OSCEs and long cases**, studying in a group is one of the best ways to learn as others can point out aspects you can improve on, and you can also learn from their mistakes.

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

Having a **clear sight of tasks** that need to be done makes it easier to do things in a strategic matter and not get so overwhelmed with the work load. Along with that, giving yourself **personal deadlines** to do things allows you to work on your own terms and hold yourself accountable for your own work.



“ON” AND “OFF” TIME

A **healthy balance** between working and relaxing is fundamental in managing stress levels in college. One of the most damaging things to do in medical school is to have it be the centre of your life every single day. Of course it is necessary to have “on” days to do well in this discipline, however taking **personal time or “off” days is just as essential**.

It may be difficult to detach oneself, but making the time for a hobby, going for a walk, daily exercise or spending time with friends is incredibly crucial for stress management.

“To never know the word stress and to enjoy everything that you do! I have never known the word stress or at least very seldomly when I was in medical school up to now working with RCSI and clinically as a surgical SHO. This is because if sometimes for example studying gets too much, I will stop and start on dinner or quite literally get ready for bed at 7.30pm, especially now when it gets dark very early! Never think again that looking after yourself is a waste of time or not productive! I am happily being busy and hustling now just as well as I am looking after myself!”

Dr Amira Amir
General Surgery, Connolly Hospital, Ireland.

Securing *Great* Letters of Recommendation



It can be daunting for medical students to approach very busy doctors and ask them to write us a letter of recommendation. What advice do you have for getting a good LOR?

"Best advice is to ask them for one in the clinic in between patients! Ask doctors whether they prefer that you prepare a letter that they can sign on or if they can write you one. Also confirm if consultants are happy for you to follow the request for letter up by email or text once you have finished placement if it's delayed. If all failed, contact consultants' secretaries to kindly remind consultants of the letters. Best to always leave a placement with the letter, so ask early-2nd or 3rd week of placement to avoid not having one at all!"
-Amira Amir, General Surgery, Connolly Hospital, Ireland.

"It's expected that you'll ask for a letter of recommendation when completing electives in the US, so don't be afraid to ask. Ideally you get a letter from the program director, but if there is another attending you worked with more who knows you better, they will probably write a stronger letter. Let the residents know who you are asking to write you a letter so they can give strong feedback about you to that person. Provide your CV/drafted personal statement to your letter writer and if appropriate given your relationship with them, ask them to highlight certain qualities or skills in the letter.

Note: If you're asking an Irish doctor for a LOR for the US, I'd advise giving samples/structure as the expectation of an LOR in the US is different than that in other countries.'

Nicole Melchior, General Surgery, St. Agnes, USA.

"Asking for LORs is truly the WORST part of medical school, but most of the physicians you are asking understand this. My best advice is to:

- Ask early in the rotation, so they are keeping an eye out for you throughout and know that you're interested in their evaluation.
- Keep a log of tasks you complete and patients you care for so you can provide it to them later. This way they can add personal examples to the letter, making it much stronger.
- At the end of the rotation, confirm that they are willing to write you a "strong" LOR. If they care about you as a student, and feel they cannot provide you with a strong letter, they will probably tell you that up front – and no letter is way better than a weak letter."

-Clare Lambert, Neurology, Yale University, USA.

The key to a good LOR is finding a good mentor wherever you do your electives. I would recommend getting an LOR from someone in the country you are interested in working in, and ideally in the region or even the hospital you hope to work in. The away rotation is your opportunity to put your best foot forward and show the program that you will be a strong, reliable resident and an enthusiastic learner. Ideally most of your LORs are also from attendings working in the specialty you are applying for. Attendings in the US are very familiar with the LOR process and, from my experience, open to mentoring students and providing these, so don't be afraid to ask. Here are some additional tips:

- Identify a mentor or two early on. Within the first few days of your rotation, let them know that you are applying this cycle to whichever field, and that you are seeking a LOR towards the end of your rotation.
- Ask what milestones you would need to meet in order to receive a strong recommendation.
- Spend time working with your mentor, be your best self!
- Check in with them for mid-rotation feedback, or feedback at multiple timepoints. At the end of your rotation, remind them in person about the letter and send a follow up email with clear timelines as to when you need it.

-Desiree D'Souza, Child Neurology, Children's National Washington DC, USA.

"I recommend making it clear from relatively early on in your time with the doctor that you are hoping for a letter, and to spend as much time with them as possible during that rotation. Ideally, get at least one letter from someone who has known you for a long time – I had my research PI who has been working with me since Foundation Year write me a letter and this was much stronger for my application, given that he had known me for 5 years and had worked with me in multiple different ways/settings."

-Gabrielle Sanatani, Paediatrics, University of Colorado, USA

Cold Emailing: The Do's and Don'ts

Cold emailing involves a student **reaching out** to a person of interest who they think can aid them in what they endeavor to accomplish. Whether it be **research opportunities, electives or guidance** in a field, students can use this method to further themselves academically. However, in order for cold-emailing to work, you have to do it right.



Cold emailing can seem like a **daunting** task to many, however it is one of the most **essential** factors to making **critical connections** to people who can further your career.

We asked our RCSI Alumni 'Did you ever send cold emails to seek new learning opportunities? In your opinion, what are the Do's and Don'ts of cold emailing?'



"I did this using the RCSI alumni mentor network when I was in SC1 and made some really great connections. I'd recommend keeping the email brief (say who you are, how you found this person/how you are connected to them if they are RCSI alumni, what your career goals are) and ask if you could schedule a call to discuss whatever you'd like to gain from them. They are more likely to respond if there is something tangible they can help you with (involvement in their research, an elective, etc) vs just a generic conversation about advice (particularly if you are a junior medical student).

If you're asking about research, include a brief statement about similar research you may have experience with to show that you could contribute something to their team. If you're asking about an elective, talk about the clinical experience you already have (for US, you can say you completed your core rotation in that field and want to apply to that specialty for residency)."

Nicole Melchior,
General Surgery, St. Agnes, USA.

"I definitely did lots of cold emailing as a medical student. If you do use this tactic, you need to make sure you have a specific question / idea and that you have done your research. For example, I wouldn't send multiple faculty a similar email without a clear reason, as they may not respond. I made some great connections through cold emailing and maintained them throughout intermediate cycle, senior cycle and all the way to matching, but it's a lot of work and you have to be targeted and focused in your approach. Faculty receive tons of random emails every day, so you need to ask / suggest / discuss something that both catches their interest and makes them want to take the time to respond. Ensure the email is succinct and to the point, in my experience people in medicine don't really maintain focus beyond the first couple lines."

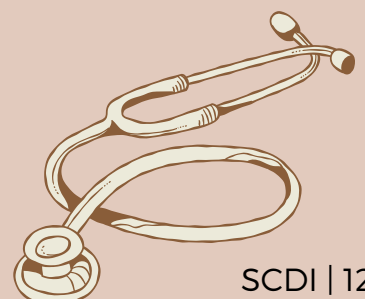
Clare Lambert,
Neurology, Yale University, USA.

"I sent many cold emails when I was looking for electives in my SC1/M3 year, as many programs had closed to outside rotators because of the pandemic. I ended up getting my pediatric neurology experience through a cold email, after sending many during the year. The elective I got was a pivotal part of my education and residency application. So if you need to- definitely cold email! I encourage you to be specific and thoughtful in who you email and what opportunity you are looking for. Tailor your email to the specific person, and don't mass email people from the same institution at the same time. It took a lot of hard work but eventually my cold emails led to a huge opportunity, and I hope it goes the same for you!"

Desiree D'Souza, Child Neurology,
Children's National Washington DC.

"Absolutely! It is daunting and unpleasant. DO: attach your resume, keep it succinct and relevant, be flexible in what you are willing to do (e.g., start dates, different projects), give 1 or 2 points as to why you are qualified. DON'T: email over holidays/weekends, be too casual/colloquial."

Gabrielle Sanatani, Paediatrics,
University of Colorado, USA.





QUESTIONS

Road to Residency: RCSI Students' Perspective

With every SCDI issue, we present to you four thought-provoking questions relating to the topic at hand. Through this activity, we hope to spark insightful dialogue surrounding important issues, foster critical thinking, and uncover new perspectives.

Oftentimes, many of the opportunities acquired by medical students fall under the supervision of senior professionals. How should students approach finding a balance between learning under the guidance of senior professionals while also advocating for hands-on experience?

Start brainstorming your own unique answers to typically-asked interview questions: What are your biggest strengths & weaknesses? Who is your role model and why? Have you ever faced an ethical dilemma in the workplace and if so, how did you handle it?

One of the key points we outlined as a method of managing stress in this SCDI issue is the importance of having a tight support group around you. In your own experience, what are the ways you and your peers have supported each other?

What is something you wish you knew when you first started out in medical school? How might that have changed the course of your career?

Let us know your thoughts at
womeninsurg@rcsi.com.
Best response wins a €10 voucher!

SOURCES

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"Discrimination in Gender-affirming Healthcare"
to womeninsurg@rcsi.com



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