

# Evaluation of the AAP Medical Student Summer Clinical Externship

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## Introduction

The Medical Student Summer Clinical Externship (MSSCE) program is an 8-week clinical externship program in PM&R hosted by AAP and offered to medical students prior to their second year of medical school. The program was piloted in 2012 and has had over 100 medical student participants. Various institutions sponsor participants and educate them in the essentials of PM&R to promote interest in the field and increase student-faculty mentorship opportunities. Previous studies have revealed that the lack of a standardized PM&R curriculum in medical school has contributed immensely to the decreased medical student exposure to PM&R. The present study seeks to analyze the impact of the MSSCE program on medical students’ choice of PM&R as a specialty.

## Methodology

Study data was collected from longitudinal qualitative and quantitative surveys collected anonymously and voluntarily using SurveyMonkey. Students were asked to complete a pre-participation and post-participation survey. Survey results were compared with a t-test for statistical significance. The ultimate career choice of participants from 2012-2017 was found by searching public residency directories. The American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (ABPM&R) confirmed the number of prior participants from 2015-2017 that are currently residents in a PM&R residency program.

## Results

Of 113 participants, 101 completed pre-participation and post-participation surveys. Results revealed a statistically significant increase in interest in physiatry ( $p < 0.05$ ) and participants’ scores for comfort and experience level in obtaining a history of present illness, general physical exam, developmental disabilities, musculoskeletal disabilities, and neurologic disabilities ( $p < 0.001$ ) after participation (Table 1). For qualitative results, a “Wordle” word count analysis was completed on the short answer responses to identify common themes (Figure 1). Of the 78 participants from 2012-2017, the residency placement of 68 participants was found. Of these 68 participants, 17 began residency training in PM&R (12.6%). Per ABPM&R, 8 participants from the 63 that participated in the program from 2015-2017 are currently in a PM&R residency program.



Figure 1: Qualitative Results

	Pre-survey	Post-survey
<i>3-point Likert</i>		
Skill obtaining history	2.22	2.55**
Skill performing physical	1.84	2.41**
Knowledge in developmental disability	1.29	2.31**
Knowledge in musculoskeletal disability	1.41	2.24**
Knowledge in neurologic disability	1.58	2.80**
<i>5-point Likert</i>		
Interest in PM&R	1.89	4.22*

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.0001$

Table 1: 2013 – 2016 Pre- and Post-Participation Survey (n=48)

## Discussion

These results highlight the benefits of an early structured exposure to physiatry. Establishing mentor-mentee relationships early in training may serve to catalyze growth and understanding of the field as well as to help inform future decisions regarding research interests and extracurricular involvement. Students’ increased comfort level in treating patients with developmental, musculoskeletal, and neurologic disabilities may lead to improvements in the quality of care received by these populations. Regardless of eventual specialty choice, all participants gain an increased awareness of the scope of practice of physiatry that will hopefully lead to better utilization of physiatry as a resource for their future patients.

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This program provides a unique opportunity to learn about the role of a physiatrist. This early clinical exposure to PM&R and access to mentorship significantly increased student interest in and knowledge of the field.

