

How do I know if Surgery is for me?

There is no way to prove you are a born surgeon. Surgeons are trained, not born. Facility with knot-tying and sewing is handy, but some of the most wise and revered surgeons in practice today were not known for their dexterity when they were medical students or junior surgery residents. Intelligence, conscientiousness, creativity, courage, and perseverance on behalf of your patients are the critical factors, and they outweigh the small differences in dexterity among most medical students.

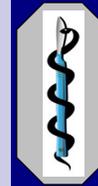
Becoming a good surgeon is a life-long process. Thoughtful reflection on the outcomes of your decisions and those of others will gradually give you the most important quality, 'good surgical judgment'.

The fact is that not all students will be happy with a surgical career. First and foremost, you must thrive on being part of the surgical enterprise, and you must absolutely look forward to opportunities to go to the operating room. Additionally, you must be flexible. A surgeon's day is seldom predictable, and surgeons must view this unpredictability as an enjoyable challenge.



Medical students who love being in the operating room tend to be people who are comfortable with three-dimensional imagery; they often overlap with medical students who enjoyed learning anatomy. They find doing concrete physical work for their patients truly satisfying. Being comfortable as a surgeon also means being comfortable accepting the responsibility of a role as leader of a team. Motivating the team and facilitating their best efforts are skills you can learn in your surgery training program, but at the core surgeons must be able to accept responsibility.

Surgeons are people who find it extremely rewarding to act and see the impact of their actions on behalf of their patients. If that resonates for you, and you find yourself having the time of your life on surgical rotations, a surgical career probably is right for you. Chances are the satisfaction you derive from your surgical career will be an energizing force that will not only carry you through the training process, it will be a benefit to those who are important in your personal life as well.



Department of Surgery

UNDERGRADUATE ELECTIVES

With 11 different Surgical Divisions and Training Programs, the Department of Surgery is bound to have an elective for you.

Students can sign on for either block or horizontal electives in any year of training.

We encourage first year students to consider a few weeks of a horizontal elective as a way to explore different surgical careers.

Browse thru the Program descriptions and then contact Joanne Winch to make the arrangements.

We hope to see you soon.

Dr. Susan Reid
Associate Chair, Education
Department of Surgery



CONTACT PERSON

Joanne Winch
jwinch@mcmaster.ca



Department of Surgery Clinical Divisions

Program	What it is	Locations	Type of problems	Residency manual
Cardiac Surgery	Diseases of the pericardium, heart and great vessels.	HGH	Chest pain, irregular pulse, cyanosis, syncope	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/surgery/divisions/postgrad/Cardiac_RM_Chap1.3_MedicalExpert.html
General Surgery	Alimentary tract, trauma and critical care, endocrine and breast diseases, cancer surgery and endoscopy.	HGH, Hend, SJH, MUMC(peds)	Abdominal pain, hematemesis, bleeding, abdominal mass, distension, jaundice, vomiting, dysphagia, dyspepsia, rectal pain and discharge, breast lump, discharge	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/surgery/divisions/postgrad/GenSurg_RM_Chap1.1_MedicalExpert.html
Neurosurgery	Congenital and acquired abnormalities, trauma, and diseases affecting the nervous system	HGH, MUMC (peds)	Headache, head injury, back pain, ataxia, loss of consciousness, paralysis, paraesthesia	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/neurosurgery/documents/ObjectivesofTrainingandSpecialtyTrainingRequirements.pdf
Ophthalmology	Optical, medical and surgical disorders and diseases of the eye, adjacent structures, the visual pathways, and the visual system.	CAHS	Glaucoma, retinopathy, macular degeneration, cataracts, eye emergencies, strabismus	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/ophthalmology/resident_manual/ophthalmology_resident_manual_01_03.html
Orthopedic Surgery	Musculoskeletal pathology: limbs, spine, tendons, ligaments.	HGH, SJH, Hend, MUMC (peds)	Fractures, dislocations, painful/swollen joints, deformities, arthritis, back pain, metabolic bone disease, tumours	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/orthopaedicsurgery/CanMedsCompetencies.html
Otolaryngology	Disorders of the ear, the upper respiratory and upper alimentary systems and related structures and the head and neck.	MUMC(peds), SJH	Neck lumps, thyroid nodules, sinus, stridor, hoarseness, tumours	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/surgery/divisions/postgrad/OtoHeadNeck_RM_Chap6.2_MedicalExpert.html
Plastic Surgery	Therapeutic or cosmetic reformation of soft tissue	HGH, SJH, MUMC(peds),	Soft tissue injury to hand, burns, craniofacial deformity or injury, head, neck and breast reconstruction and cosmetic surgery	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/plasticsurgery/resident_manual/plastic_surgery_resident_manual_04_05_tsd.html
Thoracic Surgery	Congenital and acquired diseases of the chest wall, mediastinum, lungs, trachea, pleura, esophagus and diaphragm.	SJH	emphysema, lung cancer, emphysema, cancer of the esophagus, chest wall deformities, chest pain, dyspnea, cough, hemoptysis	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/thoracicsurgery/resident_manual/thoracic_surgery_resident_manual_2_1_medicaexpert.html
Urology	Abnormalities and diseases of the genitourinary tract of the male and the urinary tract of the female (includes endourology, urooncology, andrology, pediatrics, neurourology, renal transplantation and general urology with an active interest in minimally invasive surgery	SJH (centre), HGH, JCC MUMC(peds),	Hematuria, pneumaturia, dysuria, flank pain, urinary frequency, urinary tract obstruction, incontinence, inguinal and femoral swellings	http://rcpsc.medical.org/residency/certification/objectives/urology_e.pdf
Vascular Surgery	Diseases of the vascular system	HGH	aneurysms, embolisms, strokes, trauma, diabetes-related peripheral vascular disease, lymphedema, swollen limbs, limb/digital pain, pulsating mass, leg ulcers.	http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/qa/vascular_surgery/resident_manual/vascular_surgery_resident_manual_01_01_medicaexpert.html

LEGEND

HGH – Hamilton General Hospital	JCC - - Juravinski Cancer Centre
Hend – Henderson Hospital	MUMC – McMaster University Medical Centre
SJH – St. Joseph's Healthcare	CAHS – St. Joseph's Centre for Ambulatory Health Services (King Campus)