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# Preparing M1/M2 students for the surgical wards – An on call shadowing program

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# Barriers to surgical experience during pre-clinical years

- Pre-conceived notions
- Often logistically difficult
- Little exposure to surgery



# Methods

- Electronic sign up for 1 of 3 weekend shifts
- Email reminder with instructions, directions, and do's & don'ts
  - Pre/Post Call Survey link also in email
- Encouraged you to shadow the **WHOLE TEAM** – M3's, residents, and attending
- Additional survey at the end of M3 year

## M1 & M2 Shadowing Opportunities at VCU Surgery



### Getting Started:

If you are interested in shadowing at VCU Surgery please attend our interest meeting at the beginning of the semester to receive our sign-up sheet.

### Shadowing Common Sense

1. Please refrain from bringing bags or any valuables to the hospital; you will not have a safe place to store them. Feel free to store your belongings in the lockers in MMEC.
2. Surgical attendings you are working with are very happy to have you and welcome questions. Please try to gauge the right times for conversation, etc.
3. Surgical attendings may have periods of time where they just need to deal with administrative obligations when there is not much clinically happening. In this situation you may be assigned to a resident.
4. To enhance your experience it is recommended that you shadow the entire team not just the attending.
5. Since you will not have a pager. We encourage you to share your number with a resident and/or M3. However, it is not expected of them to call you. An alternative is to work closely with the M3 since they will have a pager.
6. Remember there are M3's on service. M3's get to scrub on cases, etc. You are a shadow.
7. Enjoy the experience.

# Results

Demographics	No. (%)
Total Shifts	167
Surveys Completed	85 (50.8)
Current year in Medical School	
M1	141 (85.5)
M2	24 (14.5)
Previous trauma experience	85 (50.9)
Considering Surgery	132 (79)

Summary of experience	Mean (SD) [Range]
Trauma Alerts	6.39 (4.24)[0-20]
Operative cases	1.34 (1.43)[0-9]
Experience with:	
M3/M4	4.63(0.64)[2-5]
Intern	4.01(1.02)[1-5]
Resident	4.00(1.04)[1-5]
Attending	3.95(1.16)[1-5]

	Before	After
Interest in Surgery	3.38(0.86)	3.71(0.87)*



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\*(p<0.01)

# Unintended Benefits

- “...most important lesson from this experience is the ability to gauge what I should know and what skills I should have as a 3rd year student ...”
- “..gives me a solid goal to aim for, knowing that it is okay to still be learning...”
- “I did learn a lot about what will be expected of me as an M3 during clerkships”
- “...gave me better insight into what is expected of M3s, M4s...”



# Conclusion

- Improved understanding of third year expectations
- 78% of shadows reported an improved perception of surgery and surgeons
- Other services have initiated similar program
- We will continue indefinitely

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Every Day, A New Discovery.

FEBRUARY 11, 2016

M1 Alex Simmonds learns "trauma surgery is where I belong in the world"

The delta trauma alert on a Friday night called about 40 people to the trauma bay. One of them was the Class of 2019's Alex Simmonds.

He'd spent the evening shadowing a third-year student on a trauma shift.

"My M3 instructed me to don the full range of personal protective equipment: gloves, gown, face shield and mask as practice for the future," Simmonds wrote in a first-person account posted to his medical class' website. "As just an M1 shadow, I wasn't expected to actually participate in the case, just watch."

Simmonds had worked as an EMT before coming to the VCU School of Medicine, but he'd never been witness to a bedside thoracotomy.

"This is a procedure done to open up the chest, often so that compressions can be done directly on the patient's heart, which is much more effective than regular CPR."

To his surprise, he went from an observer to being recruited to perform cardiac massage.

Prepped with instruction from the attending surgeon, Simmonds inserted his hands into the patient's opened chest cavity. He later wrote how "Lots of things go through your mind while you're pumping someone else's heart for them. 'Am I doing this right?', 'I'm actually holding a person's heart,' and 'I wonder if we can actually save this person,' just to name a few."

Susan R. DiGiovanni, MB4, HB9, interim senior associate dean for medical education and student affairs, says Simmonds' experience is a testament of the type of things that can happen to a student on VCU's MCV Campus. "You are involved in patient care."

At the beginning of the shift, Simmonds says, he was "someone who was enthusiastic about science and healthcare." That Friday evening, he learned he loves decision-making under pressure, being part of a team

Before he left for medical school last fall, a favorite EMT physician told Alex Simmonds "Someday, someone is going to throw you a pass. Make sure you're ready to catch it."

