

Art by Tuesday Haynes

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RESEARCH

Exploring Oncology Through the IMPACT Medical Scholar Program

Every summer, BCM medical students engage in various research programs. Among them was second-year medical student Kevin Hoffman, whose interest in oncology led him to the IMPACT Medical Scholar Program.

This eight-week summer experience bridges the gap between medical education and cancer research. Through problem-based learning and mentorship, students gain knowledge about cancer biology, technology and communication skills.

“One of the largest components of the program is a series of lectures by renowned oncologists from Baylor College of Medicine and MD Anderson,” said Hoffman. The invited speakers discussed several tools that physician-scientists commonly utilize in cancer research, including genetic testing, database projects and hypothesis testing.

The program also emphasized active learning through oncology case discussions. “We engaged in problem-based learning activities where we researched cases on our own and then met later to review our findings,” Hoffman said. This approach highlighted the importance of independent learning combined with team-based critical thinking.

Mentorship was another core feature of the program. Hoffman was paired with a Ph.D. candidate and an M.D.-Ph.D. student. During weekly meetings, they described their career paths in cancer research, explained where they were heading next and provided invaluable guidance for medical trainees.

Throughout the program, Hoffman met with cancer survivors several times and learned their stories. This was one of the most meaningful aspects of the program for him, as it allowed him to connect the research he was engaged in with the patients whose lives his findings may eventually serve.

The program concluded with a capstone event. “We presented our work in a 15- to 20-minute oral presentation, wrote an abstract and shared the story from an interview with a cancer survivor,” Hoffman said.

The experience also reshaped his perspective on his own research. “It has made me more reflective about how my work impacts people and more conscious of accessibility and terminology since research is often written in inaccessible language,” Hoffman said.

For other students interested in similar programs, his advice was clear: “I originally learned about this program from a friend, so networking is very valuable,” said Hoffman. “Keep an open mind, be willing to help others and communicate your own interests so others can tell you about opportunities that fit your career goals.”

Written by Justin Hu and Malay Shah
 Edited by Isabelle Russo

EVENTS & NEWS

A Toast to the MS2 Class

Students celebrate with End-of-Science-Basic Ball



Photo by Victoria Young-Odor

Marble floors, antique columns and extravagant clothing fit for a royal court—these things might not bring your typical medical school social to mind. However, at the End of Basic Sciences Ball (EBSB), referred to as “Med Prom”, second-year medical students spent a fashionable night celebrating the end of the 15-month pre-clinical period and completion of the Comprehensive Basic Science Exam (CBSE).

Beyond offering an evening of dancing and good company, the EBSB has earned its place as a cherished, long-standing tradition at BCM that marks the transition to clinical rotations.

Behind the scenes, second-year class senate members on both campuses started planning EBSB a full year in advance. In Houston, the senate enlisted the help of 14 dedicated prom committee members to bring to life the vision of “Med Gala: Licensed to Heal, Dressed to Kill.”



Photo courtesy of Vijaya Dutt

Photo by Victoria Young-Odor

This theme fused the themes that tied for first in a student vote: “Med Gala” and “Casino Royale.” True to the theme, 200 feet of red carpet adorned the marble floors, amplifying the elegance of the Bell Tower venue.

“We wanted to keep [EBSB] as close as possible to the end of classes and CBSE,” said Houston programming chair and second-year medical student Mahir Kota. He shared his gratitude for the committee members who helped achieve this goal and explained their pivotal role in fine-tuning the intricate event details to deliver a seamless night.

The team overcame obstacles like the DJ canceling just hours before the event and conflicting class times. Despite the time constraints, they efficiently set up for the event in just two hours.

From the elegant champagne tower to the personalized “Med Gala” matchsticks, every detail reflected the team’s creativity and passion. The class superlatives, including prom king and queen, class comedian and dynamic duo, brought lighthearted laughter to the night.

The Houston team shook things up with a drink menu featuring witty medical nods like the Mar-GERD-rita and Atrial Fizz. Throughout the night, volunteer photographers stood by to capture moments on the red carpet, and guests took home souvenir photostrips from the fan-favorite photobooth.

At Temple, the four second-year class senate leaders took charge of planning and secured several discounts to keep ticket prices low. Several first-year students also continued the tradition of helping with set-up and clean-up on the day of EBSB.

This year’s Temple EBSB was held about a month after the CBSE exam. The event took place at the Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum, where students stepped into the glitz and glamour of the Roaring ‘20s for the theme, “A Gilded Gala.”

The Temple senate knew good food would be an integral part of the night’s success. They selected a local company called Let Us Do the Cooking, which catered a menu featuring classic American and Thanksgiving-style dishes.

Attendees praised the mashed potatoes as well as the champagne tower, filled with celebratory Prosecco. Through Patagonia jacket sales, profit shares and ticket sales, the senate also funded a generous open bar.

Throughout the night, first-year student photographer Victoria Young-Odor captured special moments and promptly uploaded the edited pictures on the same night.

Senate members awarded all the attendees with a superlative title based on their unique contributions to the class experience. Second-year class president Mia Fuentes led everyone through a year's worth of memories, sharing certificates ranging from class clown to best smile.

For Temple programming chair and second-year medical student Sarvani Ganapavarapu, EBSB turned into a heartwarming family affair. Her mom, experienced in wedding balloon-arch design, set up the photo booth and balloon decorations. Her twin sister traveled from New York to help juggle tasks throughout the day. And in a true show of support, her dad brought pizza for student volunteers.

"I didn't realize how much effort went into the event, so it was truly rewarding to help my sister with set-up the day of," said Ganapavarapu's sister, Srivani Ganapavarapu. "It was even more amazing to see it all come together into such a beautiful and unforgettable celebration."

EBSB was more than a glamorous celebration; it was a culmination of hard work over the past year and a testament to BCM's strong student culture. After weeks spent in CBSE prep and research, many shared that the best part of the night was seeing classmates and significant others gathered together before splitting into clerkship squads.

Written by Vijaya Dutt and Sahiti Pydimarri
Edited by Maheen Kara

LIFE & ARTS

Temple, Texas: Small Town, Big Character

At first glance, Temple, Texas, may not seem like much. With a deeper look, however, you'll see that Temple is a town with a rich history in the railroad industry, an emphasis on community and many unique spots.



Art by Megan Benavides

STUDY SPOTS

There are plenty of fun study spots in and around Temple. The Slyfox coffee shop, built inside old train cars, is a nod to the area's railroad industry origins. A favorite is Blackbird — a triple threat: speakeasy, coffee shop and bookstore all in one. Just slide the painting to the right and step into a lively, relaxed space complete with a fireplace and a giant portrait of Dolly Parton.

If you are leaving class and want somewhere close by, 1914 is right by the hospital and is a popular choice for both medical students and residents.

On the rare days with nice weather, check out On The Go, a coffee truck five minutes from the hospital with seating, Wi-Fi and happy hour on Mondays with half-off drinks. They also offer a 10% discount for students and hospital employees.

For those who want a quieter spot, check out the surprisingly stocked, three-story Temple Public Library, where you can reserve private study rooms with whiteboards and large windows overlooking downtown Temple. The Baylor Scott & White Library on campus is also a convenient spot for group studying and has quiet rooms if you prefer silence.

FOOD SCENE

Although not known for its food scene, the Temple area has many spectacular food options. For those interested in breakfast or brunch, Water Street Waffle Co. serves elaborate waffle concoctions and an ever-changing monthly menu.

If waffles aren't your thing, stop by Early Morning Creperie, owned by a mother-daughter duo who traveled to Paris together, fell in love with crepes and decided to come back and start their own business.

For Asian cuisine, visit La Dalat for Vietnamese options, K1 The Bloom for Korean options or Narunya's for Thai options. For Tex-Mex, check out Las Marias or one of the many food trucks in the area, including El Reparado and Jalapeno Express. If you're looking for a date-night spot, visit Pignetti's for Italian, or Cheeves Brothers Steakhouse for a classic steakhouse experience.

Interestingly, the Temple area is packed full of breweries and wineries. Temple is home to a BJ's Brewery tasting room, which brews standard BJ's Brewhouse fare as well as unique local varieties.

At Treno's Pizzeria & Taproom, you can complement your hand-crafted, wood-fired pizza with a beverage from their self-pour tap wall, which has 36 local and domestic beers, ciders and wines. For a more traditional brewery, check out Bird Creek for burgers, friendly staff and live music on the weekends. There are five wineries in the immediate area, all with great deals on wine tastings. At BeeMaRosa, you can sip wine and walk through the vineyards.

FUN & LEISURE

One of Temple's most enjoyable traditions takes place downtown on the first Friday of each month, when locally owned businesses stay open late, offer special discounts and often share free snacks and cookies while you shop. To make the most of the evening, the city will also invite different food trucks to the downtown area with plenty of live music.

If you're looking for a fun solo activity, date night or something to do with friends, there are plenty of beautiful outdoor areas. Belton Lake is less than 10 minutes away and is never too busy, so it's a fun and relaxing spot to paddleboard or kayak. Dana Peak Park has over 30 miles of hiking trails that surround another lake, along with plenty of shade and scenic outlook points. For artsy activities, check out That Art Place to make pottery, paint or create a fused glass masterpiece. If you want to try something totally new, try your hand at glassblowing in Salado!

All in all, Temple has a lot to offer if you're willing to explore and get to know the area. There is a huge emphasis on community and supporting small businesses here that you're unlikely to find in a larger city, and there are always free events, markets and festivals that can spice up an ordinary weekend. Make the most of your time as a student here and learn to love where you live!

Written by Kassidy Duncan and Briana Lejarza
Edited by Victoria Segal



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to future
editions!**

EVENTS & NEWS

HOMES Clinic to end partnership with BCM



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Franks

In September, BCM notified students that all student clinical activity at the Houston Outreach Medicine Education & Social Services (HOMES) Clinic would be halted until further notice. The school said that as of Sept. 1, BCM and the HOMES Clinic’s parent organization, Healthcare for the Homeless Houston (HHH), do not have an agreement that covers students for clinical services. The college said both sides are continuing discussions to maintain the partnership and find a solution.

HHH was founded in 1999 by Dr. David Buck, a Baylor physician, to meet the urgent need for accessible, holistic healthcare for Houston’s homeless population. Over the past two decades, the organization has grown to operate three integrated care clinics, six permanent supportive housing (PSH) communities and numerous outreach programs that extend medical and social services to vulnerable populations.

For many students, HOMES Clinic has been the most impactful part of their medical school experience. Fourth-year medical student and co-executive director of operations Rebecca Franks said that it was one of the main reasons she chose BCM and began volunteering during her first month of medical school.

“As the only student-run clinic in Houston, HOMES allows students to be actively involved in every aspect of patient care,” said Franks. “Not only does it help you grow confidence with histories and physicals as an MS1, but there’s a unique opportunity to develop into a leader at the clinic.”

Franks said she has also learned more about healthcare administration and the challenges involved with successfully managing a clinic while witnessing the various social and medical barriers faced by unhoused patients.

Similarly, second-year medical student and associate director of finance Shragvi Balaji was drawn to the idea of a student-run clinic that empowers medical students to take ownership of patient care.

She said the clinic is unique in its ability to integrate medical education, social advocacy and interprofessional collaboration.

Her role has given her an inside look at the behind-the-scenes collaboration that goes into sustaining this mission, including securing grants and coordinating reimbursements and donations.

Her role has allowed her an inside look at the behind-the-scenes collaboration that goes into sustaining this mission, including securing grants and coordinating reimbursements and donations.

“Working with patients who face complex barriers has shown me the importance of persistence, empathy and creative problem-solving, whether that’s finding donated medications, coordinating with shelters or simply taking time to listen,” Balaji said.

Franks was later inspired to create the preclinical elective, *Care for the Homeless*, with the help of Dr. Dana Clark and Dr. Yasmeen Quadri. Now in its third year, the elective focuses on educating medical students on caring for unhoused patients and advocating for this patient population.

“Through HOMES, I’ve had the opportunity to interact with so many faculty and community leaders dedicated to caring for homeless patients, and it has been incredibly fulfilling to go to the clinic and apply what I’ve learned and see the tangible benefits for patients,” said Franks.

Both Franks and Balaji are eager and hopeful to return to HOMES with BCM’s support. While the clinic continues to function with other local medical schools, Franks noted that BCM students have been an integral part of HOMES for more than two decades.

“I hope that we can continue this incredible partnership,” said Franks. “Behind the scenes, BCM students are constantly working on projects, quality improvement initiatives, research and publications and we hope they can continue to improve the clinic and the patients we serve.”

Franks encouraged students to reach out to homes.director@gmail.com and share their experiences at HOMES to support the organization’s mission. “We know that HOMES has had an impact on so many students, so we want to continue to collect testimonies and really show how important the clinic is to students,” said Franks.

The situation remains ongoing, and further updates are expected in the coming weeks as both parties continue discussions.

Written by Mawada Al Faisal
 Edited by Hannah Wani

This Q&A is part of an ongoing series where students share their experiences and advice. If you have a question, fill out this [form](#).



ADVICE & OPINIONS

Clinical Rotations, Answered:

MS4 Rebecca Berger discusses shelf studying tips, pre-rounding and feedback

Clinical rotations are an essential component of medical school training for developing clinical reasoning and gaining hands-on experience in various specialties. With rotations approaching, we spoke with Rebecca Berger, a fourth-year medical student applying to pediatrics this fall, to help answer common questions and help students prepare for this new milestone.

Q: How did you prepare for pre-rounding and presentations efficiently? Any tips for performing well and standing out in a genuine way?

Berger: Early on, especially if you have one or two patients, you’ll have time to practice your presentation in your head before doing it. Residents covering your patients are also a great resource for this. I think it’s important to find a routine. The mnemonic M VIOLIN (Medications, Ins/Outs, Labs, Imaging, Notes) can help.

At the end of the day, if you show that you are interested in what is going on, that is the most important. Try to remember that even though it can feel new or uncomfortable, your only job is to learn. You should feel empowered to ask questions, and you’ll find that people love teaching.

Q: What were your strategies for quickly adjusting to different teams and expectations?

Berger: Some attendings/teams will tell you their expectations up front. If they don’t, you should feel empowered to ask them. I didn’t always do this, but asking for feedback before you are done working with someone can be beneficial.

Once, I asked for feedback, and the attending asked me to present the research I did about my patients during rounds the next day—that earned me some brownie points.

Q: How did you study for shelf exams?

Berger: There is a lot of advice for this. Most people did a set number of UWorld questions each day, aiming to finish about a week before the shelf so there's time to review. I also found that the Telegram practice tests were useful along the way. Of course, people use Anki and other resources, but that is up to the user's discretion. Before the shelf, I would try to watch a Dr. High Yield video on the subject a few times. The day before the test, I would watch it at double speed.

Q: What are examples of behaviors that made a strong impression on your residents/attendings?

Berger: They like it when you ask good questions. I think most questions are good, but one rule I hold myself to is Google first—especially if it's something like an acronym or disease that I am not familiar with. That way, you can use your resources and come up with more focused questions.

I'd also try to pay attention to every patient on the team during rounds. You'll learn a lot from trying to understand all the patients you round on, not just your own. As you progress (and don't feel like you have to do this early on when you are figuring out how to exist in the hospital), you can write down the to-dos for other patients on the team. That way, when the afternoon comes, you can ask if you can help with specific tasks, like checking in with a family member, calling a family member, following up on paperwork from outside hospitals or taking off a wound vacuum after being taught how on surgery.

Q: How did you handle difficult team dynamics or personalities?

Berger: Even attendings and residents get stressed. It's important to understand that someone might be curt because they're worried about something else.

Usually, when they have time again or are less stressed, they will show you they're ready to talk more and be receptive.

If you ever feel like something is inappropriate or wrong, tell the head of the rotation immediately, because they can step in and even have you switch teams. They're there to make sure you have a good learning experience.

Q: How do you ask for feedback in a way that's helpful and well-received?

Berger: As I mentioned above, asking for feedback can be helpful. I know it can feel weird/awkward to do, but the key is to ask for focused feedback. Instead of just asking, "Can I have feedback?" try something like: I am trying to work on my presentations. Now that you have worked with me for a week, have you noticed any particular areas of improvement? Or I want to make sure I'm meeting your expectations—could you share any feedback on what I'm doing well or where I can grow?

Q: How did you manage your time during clinicals? Any advice on how to best balance studying, extracurriculars, research, and life?

Berger: Trust that you'll be able to. You have done this before. Start out with fewer extracurriculars and add things back on as you get comfortable. You'll also find that you have more free time on some rotations than others

Q: What's one thing you wish you'd known before starting clinical rotations? What was the most surprising thing/best part of starting rotations? What was the most difficult part?

Berger: I wish I had known that the teams are used to working with medical students, so I didn't need to be so nervous. They're excited to teach, so showing up and being enthusiastic is the most important thing. The best part is meeting new people and recognizing familiar faces around the hospital. I also feel like getting exposure to different specialties and people was important for me to choose my path. The most difficult part? Not being able to wake up whenever I want to.

EVENTS & NEWS

The People's Voice: BCM's First Ever Performative Male Contest

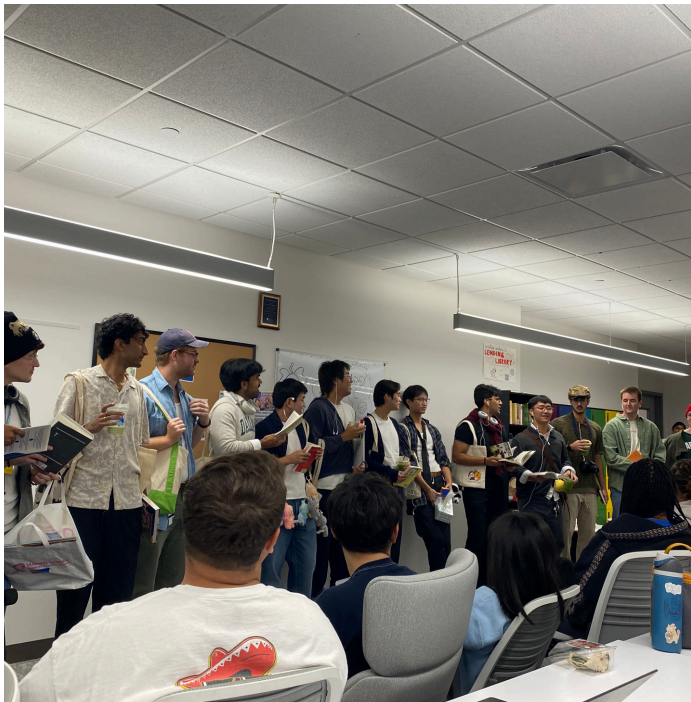


Photo courtesy of Rohan Phadke

BCM's first-ever Performative Male Contest took place on Sept. 10, featuring over 30 first-year medical students. The event highlighted the playful performance of modern masculinity, begging the question: What even is a performative male?

A performative male refers to a man who adopts a curated, untraditional aesthetic to appear more likable and progressive, often with the goal of attracting more women. Characteristic physical hallmarks feature wired headphones and loose-fitting pants with a tote bag in one hand and a matcha in the other.

Performative hobbies include never progressing past the first page of feminist literature pieces and claiming to listen to the artists Clairo and Laufey. This softer representation is a stark contrast to the parallel rise of a more traditional image of masculinity, the alpha male.

The Performative Male Contest was fierce, with each participant taking the stage individually to show just how performative they could be. Contestants flaunted Labubu dolls, distributed hygiene products and recited feminist quotes as a part of their TED Talk-style presentations.

First-year medical student and class president Kennedy Hawkins even posed probing questions to weed out fake performative males. Once the questioning concluded, audience members cast their votes to decide the most performative of them all.



Photo courtesy of Kennedy Hawkins

In the end, there was a clear winner—Teddy Carlin. Rudy Mahadev took second place, and Kylan Chen took third. There were no prizes for the podium finishers other than pride, glory and infamy as BCM's first and potentially only ultimate performative males.

The contest was equally satirical and spectacular, leaving no doubt that male performativity had officially arrived at BCM. However, the event left students wondering: Were the contestants performing or just being themselves? Perhaps that is the most performative act of all.

Written by Abhinav Vadassery
Edited by Matthew Darmadi

Research Opportunities

in the SOAR Database

Molecular predictors of treatment response

Medicine | Basic Research
Dr. Yanhong Liu | yll10@bcm.edu

Development of knee stability in children

Orthopedics | Clinical Research
Dr. Jorge Gomez | jegomez@bcm.edu

Pulmonary hypertension

Pediatrics | Clinical Research
Dr. Raysa Morales Demori | demori@bcm.edu

The Impact of Genomic Profiling and Biomarker Testing on The Diagnosis and Management of Malignancies and Rare Diseases

Clinical Research | Pathology
Dr. Li Liang | li.liang@bcm.edu

Exercise Physiology and Marfan syndrome

Pediatrics | Clinical Research
Dr. Jolie Britt | britt@bcm.edu

Implementation of a stillbirth protocol

Quality Improvement/Patient Safety
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Dr. April Adams | april.adams@bcm.edu

Infectious Disease Lab Testing

Otolaryngology | Clinical Research
Dr. Matthew Sitton | msitton@bcm.edu

Target pyroptosis to overcome treatment resistance in thoracic cancer

Translational Research | Surgery
Dr. Yuan Xu | yuan.xu@bcm.edu

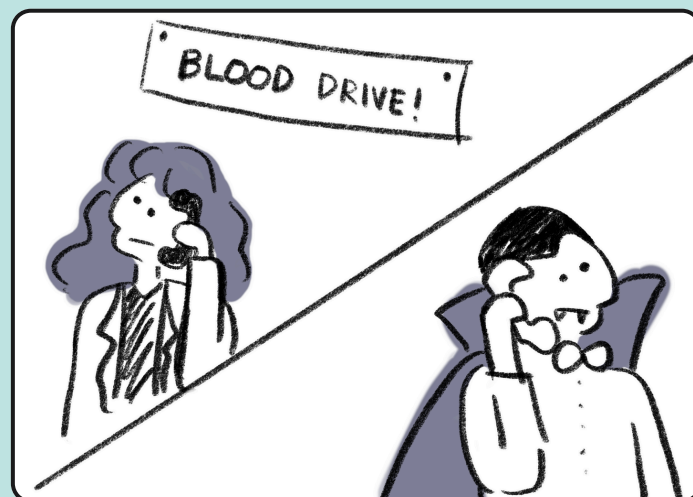
Personalized genetic diagnosis by large scale mapping variants of unknown significance

Clinical Research | Pathology
Dr. Cameron Brown | cameronb@bcm.edu

Exploring and Improving Diabetic Outcomes Using Short-Term Continuous Glucose Monitoring

Clinical Research
Family & Community Medicine
Dr. Chelsea Mendonca
Chelsea.Mendonca@bcm.edu

The Funny Bone



"What hospital did you say you were with again?"

Art by Megan Benavides

Upcoming Events

Resources for Research and Scholarship: A Guide for Medical Student Research Workshop

Drs. Perez-Oquendo, Hegefeld, and McClung discussed the resources available to support BCM medical students in research, including the SOAR and MINDS databases, library, poster template, MSRP, SOAR travel award, and more.

Email SOARoffice@bcm.edu for a copy of the presentation.

Effective Science Communication for a Lay Audience - A Two-day Workshop

October 22, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM and October 23, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

In this two-day workshop, you will learn basic skills to communicate science effectively to a lay audience. The skills are applicable to written articles, oral presentations, elevator pitches and explaining the science behind medical treatments to patients.

[Register here](#) to reserve a seat.

Navigating SciENcv to Create NIH Biosketches and Other Support Documents

October 22, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

The forms for the new NIH Biosketch and Other Support documents will become available in November 2025. These forms must be created in SciENcv (Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae) on the NCBI website. Dr. Kat Sippel will walk step by step through the process of creating these forms in SciENcv. Recordings of the talk will be made available to all registrants.

[Register here](#) for the Teams link.

Research Tool Spotlight

Resource Kit for Research and Scholarship: A Guide for Mentors of Medical Students in Research: A faculty-developed guide with tools and best practices for integrating research into the SOM curriculum at Baylor College of Medicine and supporting student engagement at all training stages.

Designed by: Ayisat Adegbindin, Hafsa Khwaja, and Zuena Karim

Travel Award Opportunity: Radiology

Medical students who have contributed as first authors or co-authors on abstracts accepted for presentation at the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) Annual Scientific Meeting are eligible to apply for the [Dr. Constantin Cope Medical Student Research Award](#). This award recognizes outstanding scholarly work and fosters student engagement in interventional radiology.

- Application for Travel Award Deadline: November 15, 2025
- Award: Travel grant covering meeting registration and a stipend to offset travel expenses.
- Eligibility: Medical students with accepted abstracts in interventional radiology.
- Notification: Recipients will be announced prior to the annual SIR meeting.

Travel Award Opportunity: Otolaryngology

Medical students are invited to apply for the [Combined Otolaryngology Spring Meetings \(COSM\) Travel Award](#), designed to encourage early engagement in otolaryngology research and professional development. The award supports students interested in presenting scholarly work and networking with national leaders in the field.

- Application for Travel Award Deadline: February 2, 2026
- Award: Funding to support travel and conference participation at COSM 2026.
- Eligibility: Medical students in any year of training (priority given to first- and second-year students).
- Notification: Awardees will be notified in early March 2026.

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