

Art by Rachael Johnson

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## Would You Like to Contribute to the SOAR Newsletter?

Categories:

- Research Events
- Research Resources
- Art or Design (Research Expression)
- Medical Student or Faculty Research Experience (Spotlight or Reflection)
- Medical Student Scholarship Accomplishments

Email [SOARoffice@bcm.edu](mailto:SOARoffice@bcm.edu)

# Databases Connecting Medical Students with Projects and Mentors

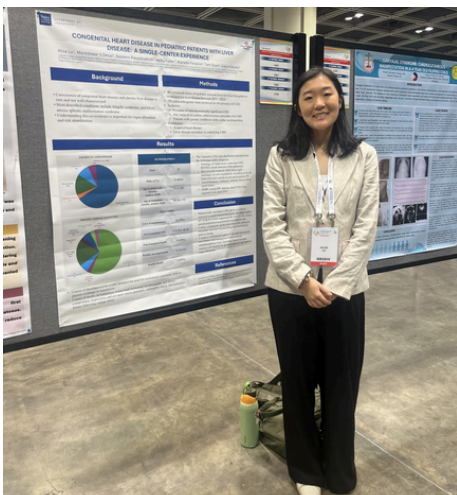
## SOAR Database: Houston-based projects available to Houston and Temple students

The SOAR Database hosts research projects led by Houston-based faculty that are available to medical students across both the Houston and Temple campuses. It serves as a centralized platform where students can explore research opportunities and connect with faculty who are actively interested in mentoring medical students in research.

Through the SOAR Database, students can use filters to narrow opportunities by specialty or research skills. Students may directly express interest in projects by emailing the project lead.

### Houston Student Reflection

Alisa Lu (MD Class of 2026) shared, “I think the part of the SOAR database which helped me the most was the filter options located in the sidebar. Using those I was able to narrow down topics to those related to subjects I was interested in. The SOAR database made it less intimidating to look for research opportunities at BCM.”



### Temple Student Reflection

Celeste Wang (MD Class of 2028) reflected: “The SOAR database provided a great introduction to the landscape of medical research at BCM.”

## MINDS Database: Temple-based projects

The Medical INquiry DatabaSe (MINDS) is a centralized platform used to connect BCM students in Temple with scholarship opportunities. Students may use MINDS to identify faculty mentors, explore available projects, and access project resources. Students may also view their project history to help track their participation in scholarship.



Celeste Wang (MD Class of 2028) reflected: “Coming into medical school, I did not have a strong research background. Therefore, I really appreciated having a database like SOAR/MINDS as a resource to help me find projects with mentors who would have the capacity to guide me through the research process.”

### Practical Tips for Finding a Project:

1. Use filters to narrow projects by department or project type.
2. Set up email alerts in SOAR, and monitor SOAR and MINDS to receive notifications when new projects are posted.
3. Email the project lead to express your interest and share alignment with your prior experience or your willingness to learn.

### SOAR by the Numbers:

- **600 projects** facilitated
- **85% virtual or hybrid projects**, increasing accessibility for students across campus

### MINDS by the Numbers:

- **180 projects** supported

## From Poster to Podium: Slide Design and Presentation Strategies

On January 21, 2026, the SOAR Office hosted the Slides Design and Presentation Workshop, a session focused on strengthening poster and podium slide design for medical students. The workshop was designed to support students at all stages of research by providing practical strategies for creating clear, visually effective slides and delivering presentations with confidence.

### Facilitators and Session Highlights

The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Brian Rissmiller, Pediatrics Residency Program Director, who shared best practices for designing slides that effectively communicate research findings. From a faculty reviewer perspective, Dr. Rissmiller emphasized slide clarity, organization, and alignment between visuals and key messages, using *the water cycle* to demonstrate effective slide design.

Students also learned from Adrian Boehnke, MS4, a prior first-place SLP Award recipient, who shared her slide preparation process and lessons learned from presenting research as a medical student. Her perspective provided practical insight not only into how to prepare an effective presentation but also into how to reflect on the SLP experience to identify areas for future research.

### Applying What You Learned

1. Review the workshop materials
2. Draft or revise your poster or podium slides
3. Seek feedback from your faculty mentor and/or the SOAR Director to refine your presentation

## Did you know you can schedule a 1:1 meeting with the SOAR Director?

- **Most popular topics:** Identifying research mentors in Houston; outlining next steps for dissemination; feedback on scholarly work; evaluating short- and long-term research commitments
- **How to schedule:** Email the SOAR Director, Mabel Perez-Oquendo, PhD, at [SOARoffice@bcm.edu](mailto:SOARoffice@bcm.edu)

## Medical Student Research Presentation (MSRP)

The Medical Student Research Presentation (MSRP) provides medical students with the opportunity to showcase their research through either a poster or oral presentation in a structured, supportive academic setting. Each presentation is 7 minutes, followed by 3 minutes of Q&A. Faculty, residents, and fellows serve as reviewers and provide written feedback using a standardized rubric. After each session, presenters receive a personalized email with their completed evaluations.

Dalton Bourne (MD Class of 2026) shared, “Participating in the most recent MSRP session was an important opportunity to practice sharing my research in an individual presentation format. It prepared me to better respond to the types of questions that audience members at conferences and in other settings will likely ask.”



MSRP is held monthly by the SOAR Office, offering ongoing opportunities for students to present their work and receive feedback. Each session includes 2-3 presenters, with presentation slots filled on a first-come, first-served basis from students who complete the registration form for the selected date. Students will be notified if they are selected to present.

Students may select or suggest their preferred presentation date using the registration form. All research presentations must be approved by the student’s project mentor prior to participation.

Presentation Skills Toolkit for Medical Students

AAMC

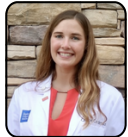


**How to sign up to present at MSRP:** Stay tuned for the registration link. The Houston and Temple campuses will host individual sessions to accommodate schedules.

**Why present or attend MSRP:** Learn from your peers' research, connect with faculty in your specialty of interest, and engage in discussions that may lead to new research opportunities.

# SHOWCASE:

## Houston and Temple Medical Student Presenters December 2024-January 2026



**Grace Cardenas, MS4**

**Mentor:** Dr. Vaishnav Krishnan

**Project Title:** Rest-Activity Rhythm Phenotypes in Adults with Epilepsy and Intellectual Disability



**Will Baltazar, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Laura Ferguson

**Project Title:** Identifying Blood RNA Biomarker Candidates Based on Temporal Expression Profiles in Healthy Individuals



**Nithya Gillipelli, MS4**

**Mentor:** Dr. Cary Hsu

**Project Title:** Impact of a Preclinical Elective Course and Surgical Skills Workshops on Student Preparation for Surgical Clerkships



**Carter Burns, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Abbas Rana

**Project Title:** Normothermic Machine Perfusion has a Significant Impact on Adjusted Short-Term Survival After Liver Transplantation



**Patrick McGeoghegan, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Abbas Rana

**Project Title:** The Impact Of Donor-recipient Weight Ratios on Pediatric Deceased Donor Liver Transplantation



**Riya Kumar, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Claire Hoppenot

**Project Title:** Preoperative Knowledge of Surrogate Decision-makers in a Diverse Patient Population



**Jessica Ehondor, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Anjali Aggarwal

**Project Title:** Assessing and Improving Medical Student Knowledge on Houston's Socio-Demographic History and its Implications on Present Day SDoH Challenges



**Shreya Tamma, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Anita Chary

**Project Title:** Understanding Drivers of Frequent Emergency Department Use in Geriatric Patients: A Qualitative Study



**Katherine Abraham, MS4**

**Mentor:** Dr. April Adams

**Project Title:** Use of Aspirin Prophylaxis in Pregnant Patients with Genetic Conditions



**Kristina Valdez, MS4**

**Mentor:** Dr. Anjali Aggarwal

**Project Title:** Assessing health literacy among Hispanic adolescents on probation



**Sarah Soubra, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Alejandra Gonzalez-Gonzalez

**Project Title:** Multiplexing Electrophysiology in Human Brain Organoids Reveals Unique Neuronal Features in MECP2 Duplication Syndrome



**Varsha Vasu, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Madhuri Vasudevan

**Project Title:** Continuous Glucose Monitoring Systems Utility in Organ Transplantation: A Literature Review



**Anna Young, MS4**

**Mentor:** Dr. Doris Lin

**Project Title:** Breaking it Down - A Case of Rhabdomyolysis after Spin Class



**Jonathan Darrow, PhD, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. John Midturi

**Project Title:** Trends in Antimicrobial Approvals, 1982-2023: Is the Pipeline in "Crisis"?



**Christine Esparza, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Clifford Calley

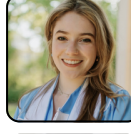
**Project Title:** A systematic review of non-invasive biomarkers for seizure forecasting in pediatric epilepsy patients



**Teresa Lyons, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Abbas Rana

**Project Title:** A Novel Intent-to-Treat Score Index to Predict Survival Outcomes in Adult Liver Transplant Candidates: A Retrospective Analysis



**Nicole Sagarnaga, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Deepak Kumar

**Project Title:** SARS-CoV-2 Infection during Pregnancy: Reprogramming of Lipid Metabolism and Impact on Fetal Growth



**Nikole Marks, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Indira Mysorekar

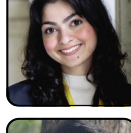
**Project Title:** Determining the efficiency of a new method for generating STBOUT trophoblast organoids



**Austin Rue, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. David Hernandez

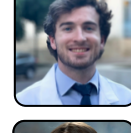
**Project Title:** Predictors of Tracheostomy in Patients Undergoing Upper Aerodigestive Tract Reconstruction by Free Flap



**Sarah Soubra, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Sameer Sheth

**Project Title:** Intolerance to Acute DBS Cessation is Associated with Distinct Lead Placement and White Matter Engagement



**Jeremy Birkmire, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Abbas Rana

**Project Title:** A Novel Donor-Recipient Risk Index to Predict Short-Term Outcomes in Pediatric Heart Transplantation



**Rehana Shaik, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Yi-Chun Liu

**Project Title:** Cartilaginous Eustachian Tube Measurements in Patients with Down Syndrome: Implications for Timing of Balloon Dilation



**Avery Christensen, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Awais Vance

**Project Title:** Mechanical Thrombectomy in the Medium Vessel Occlusions



**Brooke Cohen, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Abbas Rana

**Project Title:** A Novel Index to Predict Time to School Attendance After Pediatric Heart Transplant



**Caleb Witsken, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Lorenzo Deveza

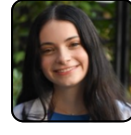
**Project:** Dose-Dependent TGF-β1 Signaling Guides Cartilage Typing and Chondrogenesis in Human Periosteum



**Vanuli Arya, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Vaishnav Krishnan

**Project:** Epilepsy Clinic Analytics: Leveraging EMR Reporting Tools to Characterize Center Volume and Complexity



**Maya Sela, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Elton Lambert

**Project:** Surgical Management of Pediatric Sialorrhea



**Kunal Verma, MS3**

**Mentor:** Dr. Bryce Allen

**Project:** Influence of Instrumentation Technique on Sagittal Alignment in Total Knee Arthroplasty: A Comparative Radiographic Study



**Joseph Reitman, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Dorina Papageorgiou

**Project:** Toward Scalable Visuospatial Perception Restoration: Individualized Neuromodulation of Visual and Cognitive Networks



**Dalton Bourne, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Maybelline Lezama

**Project:** Preparing Parents for Early Infant Crying



**Armando Amador, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Elizabeth Onugha

**Project:** Influence of Neighborhood Disadvantage and Sleep Duration on Pediatric Hypertension



**Sofia Litchev, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Elizabeth Franklin

**Project:** Empowering Practice with Scalable Care: Pilot Study of a 5-session virtual Family Intervention for adolescents with Binge Eating Disorder



**Zara Kanwal, MS2**

**Mentor:** Dr. Sohail Nibras

**Project:** High Prevalence, Low Surveillance: Metabolic Risks In Hospitalized Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder On Atypical Antipsychotics

## SOAR Travel Award: Support for Presenting Your Research

The [SOAR Travel Award](#) supports Baylor College of Medicine medical students who are presenting their research at conferences. The award helps offset travel-related expenses and supports students in disseminating their scholarly work. Each student may receive a maximum of one SOAR Travel Award during medical school, not to exceed \$500. Funding is contingent upon availability.

To be eligible, students must have appropriate research approval before initiating their project. Acceptable forms include an approved NICER form, a Student Scholarship and Inquiry Project form, or enrollment in a research elective course as part of the SOM curriculum. The project start date listed in the application must align with the corresponding approval and precede the abstract submission date. Applications without prior approval documentation will not be reviewed.

Students must be selected to present their research as the first author and presenter at a regional, national, or international conference. The research must have been conducted during medical school under the guidance of a BCM or affiliated faculty mentor. Students must be currently enrolled in the School of Medicine, in good academic standing, and not on a leave of absence or graduated at the time of application. This award is not intended to support research completed as part of dual-degree training.

Learn more and apply to the SOAR Travel Award:



Did you know where BCM medical students have presented their research? Partial list...

### Surgery

- Academic Surgical Congress
- Combined Otolaryngology Spring Meetings

### Internal Medicine

- Society of General Internal Medicine Annual Meeting
- Society of Hospital Medicine Converge

### Neurology & Neurosciences

- American Academy of Neurology Annual Meeting
- American Epilepsy Society Annual Meeting
- Child Neurology Society Annual Meeting
- AAN Summer Conference

### Pediatrics

- Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting
- AAP National Conference & Exhibition

### Gastroenterology

- Digestive Disease Week (DDW)

### Transplantation

- American Transplant Congress
- World Transplant Congress

### Medical Education

- Conference on Medical Student Education (STFM)
- Gold Humanism Summit

### Psychiatry

- American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting

### Genetics

- ACMG Annual Clinical Genetics Meeting

### Orthopaedics

- Orthopaedic Research Society Annual Meeting

### Obstetric Anesthesia

- Society for Obstetric Anesthesia and Perinatology Annual Meeting

### Regional

- Medical Student Research Presentation (MSRP) Series
- Henry J.N. Taub & James K. Alexander Medical Student Research Symposium
- Baylor Scott & White Scholars Day
- DoM Housestaff Research Symposium

These conferences represent a snapshot of recurring venues where medical students have presented their research. Students are encouraged to explore additional conference opportunities by consulting their mentors or reviewing the [SOAR conference catalog](#).

# Research Opportunities

in the SOAR Database for Houston and Temple Medical Students

## Outcome research in gastroenterology

Gastroenterology  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Hamidreza Moein

## Responsive neurostimulation in epilepsy

Neurology  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Zulfi Haneef

## Impact of a virtual outpatient group therapy on physical and mental health outcomes for adolescents with anorexia nervosa

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Elizabeth Franklin

## Mental health interventions that have been conducted in the NICU and their overall effectiveness

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Danielle Gonzales

## Collection and analysis of human specimens

Cardiovascular  
Translational Research  
Dr. Xander Wehrens

## Translational research in gastrointestinal malignancies

Surgery  
Translational Research  
Dr. Rajat Bhattacharya

## Invasive fungal infectious in pediatric solid organ transplant recipients

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Claire Bocchini

## The role of parent motivation in adolescent recovery outcomes for Anorexia Nervosa

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Elizabeth Franklin

## Therapeutic development for flaviviruses

Pediatrics  
Basic Research  
Dr. Jennifer Clinton

## The use of technology-based mental health interventions in NICU

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Danielle Gonzales

## Pediatric hematology

Pediatrics  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Kemi Olaiya

## Psych boarding in ED

Emergency Medicine  
Clinical Research  
Dr. Heba Mesbah

These projects were posted in the past month and are still active. Additional opportunities are available in the [SOAR database](#).



Art by Megan Benavides and Grace Anderson

## Upcoming Events

**February 10, 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM**

**Theory and Conceptual Frameworks in Health Professions Education Research**

MERS-hosted session

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

**February 18**

**Student Scholarship & Inquiry Program Office Hours**

Houston students; 12:00 PM: [Teams link](#)

Temple students; 5:30 PM: Medical Library

**February 25, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM**

**Tips and Tricks for Wrangling Word**

Department of Medicine-hosted session

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

**February 27, 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM**

**Zotero: Your Research Lifeline**

TMC Library-hosted session

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

## Travel Awards for Medical Student Presentations

**Combined Otolaryngology Spring Meeting**

- **Conference Dates:** April 22-26, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** February 2, 2026
- **Location:** Phoenix, AZ
- [Travel award application](#)

**American Gastroenterological Association - Digestive Disease Week (DDW)**

- **Conference Dates:** May 2-5, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** February 19, 2026
- **Location:** Chicago, IL
- [Travel award application](#)

## Local Conferences

Henry J.N. Taub & James K. Alexander Medical Student Research Symposium:

[Event website.](#)

- **Event Date:** March 5, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** Closed
- **Location:** Rayzor Lounge

**Main Topics:** Medical students in Houston and Temple presenting research in basic science, education, health system science, and clinical research.

Baylor Scott & White Scholars Day:

[Event website.](#)

- **Event Date:** May 8, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** February 20, 2026
- **Location:** Medical Education Center

**Main Topics:** Medical students in Temple presenting research in medical innovation, quality improvement, clinical vignette, research, and more.

TEACH-S Conference:

[Conference website.](#)

- **Conference Date:** May 8, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** February 4, 2026
- **Location:** Cancer Prevention Building (CPB), Houston, TX

**Main Topics:** (1) interprofessional collaboration, (2) teamwork, and (3) shared learning in healthcare education

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Baylor  
College of  
Medicine

## SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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STUDENT  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
ADVANCEMENT IN  
RESEARCH (SOAR)

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