Scheduling clinical clerkships and rotations

After your second year of medical school, you will spend the remaining two years doing clinical clerkships, also called rotations, in multiple physician specialties. Unlike the first half of medical school, which consists of nearly 100% objective examinations, the second half is a combination of objective and subjective examinations.

This transition is a critical one. Your grades during your third year of medical school will be an important part of your residency application. Also, the people you interact with during clerkships may eventually be those who will write letters of recommendation for you or be advisers in your fourth year.

Following are tips for scheduling your clinical clerkships and rotations to maximize your opportunities. Keep in mind that the procedure for scheduling clinical clerkships will differ among medical schools, with some schools offering greater flexibility than others.

Check out these four things to know before you start clinical rotations.

Get started ASAP

Consider scheduling a rotation early in your third year in a specialty that interests you. This will provide you an opportunity to have hands-on experience in that field and enable you to make a more educated decision on whether to choose that specialty.

Gaining general clinical experience prior to starting specialized rotations may be necessary to equip you with the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed in more specialized rotations.

Read about the essential professionalism do’s and don’ts during clinicals.

Note any special circumstances

For those participating in early matches and the military selection board, schedule rotations earlier to accommodate their timelines.

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/medical-students/clinical-rotations/scheduling-clinical-clerkships-and-rotations

Copyright 1995 - 2021 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.
For those participating in the SF Match, which oversees the matching process for neurosurgery and ophthalmology residencies, schedule rotations before interview season, which runs from October to January.

Health Professions Scholarship Program students can optimize their applications to the residency programs they are interested in by doing one rotation early in their fourth year and the other just before the selection board meets in November.

Learn more about when to do key medical school rotations.

**It’s OK to not know**

If you have identified particular programs of interest, doing elective rotations at those institutions can give you a chance to work directly with attending and resident physicians in those programs.

But if you are undecided about which specialty to choose, doing rotations that include both surgical and nonsurgical disciplines can provide you with a wide variety of experiences to assist your decision-making process.

Find out how to thrive during away rotations, and read more about medical school clinical rotations.