

## Matching into plastic surgery: The value of research fellowships

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**Purpose:** Although a growing number of plastic surgery applicants are interested in research fellowships, no resources exist to guide their decision making. Therefore, this study was performed to serve as a reference for individuals seeking a residency in plastic surgery.

**Methods:** Surveys were sent to integrated plastic surgery residency applicants from the past two years as well as program directors regarding prevalence, productivity and utility of research fellowships. A comparative analysis was then performed.

**Results:** 129 individuals participated in the study representing a 31% response rate. Approximately 27% of applicants participated in a research fellowship with 44% performing both basic science and clinical projects. Most applicants (55%) underwent a research fellowship to strengthen their applications. An average of 8 publications and 5 presentations were obtained during the research fellowship. Approximately 95% of research fellows matched into plastic surgery however, only 18% of applicants matched at the institution at which the fellowship was performed. Most research fellows believe that research is very important when applying for plastic surgery and would recommend a fellowship to interested medical students. Program directors rated research experience as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important factor behind letters of recommendation and academic performance. Approximately 1-4 publications and 1-2 presentations were viewed as a productive fellowship. Quality of publications was more important than quantity.

**Conclusion:** Research fellowships are a great way to strengthen one's involvement in plastic surgery. Applicants with strong research backgrounds are highly sought after and significantly increase their chances of landing a coveted plastic surgery residency position.