

Getting Involved in Research

Are you looking for a way to enhance your resume? Maybe you are looking for an opportunity to work individually with a faculty member or maybe you just want to take on a new challenge that will set you apart from your colleagues. Perhaps research may be your answer.

Research can be intrinsically exciting. *You probably think you read that last sentence incorrectly, but let me repeat myself one more time.* Research CAN be intrinsically exciting. Only those who actually have the experience of framing questions, generating hypotheses, and implementing plans to test these hypotheses can discover this aspect of research. The enjoyment of the process is enhanced when the question is original and the researcher is the first to see the answers. It is also particularly exciting when students have the opportunity to present their research at local, regional, or national conferences such as those associated with the American College of Sports Medicine.

Most students probably do not enter the study of sports medicine with the expectation of pursuing a research or academic career. Beginning students are often surprised to find that research is not only an important part of sports medicine, but is also a part of their own training that may greatly impact their careers. A crucial first step in establishing the importance of research experience is to understand its relevance to intellectual, academic, and personal career success.

Individual research experience is a great opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to understanding how research really works. Ultimately, the goal of sports medicine research is to contribute to the knowledge base in this field of study. Therefore, any research has the potential to provide researchers, as well as practitioners, with important information regarding human physiology, movement, performance, and/or behavior. Undergraduate and graduate students can be a part of this intellectual process and contribute valuable information to our field. Furthermore, many graduate programs-PhD programs in particular- seek individuals who have research experience. Thus, students who participate in research have a competitive advantage in the graduate school admissions process. This is particularly important for students whose Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores or grades may be low.

So...where do you start? Perhaps you could begin by performing literature reviews on a topic of interest. Journals such as ACSM's *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* are excellent for getting great research ideas. Courses such as research design or statistics courses will also be helpful for understanding data collection and analysis. If this all sounds too complicated for you or if you do not feel confident enough to conduct your own research, perhaps you could act as a research assistant on a project already established by a faculty member in your department. This option not only gives you great experience, but it could also help you form your own research agenda on a related topic.

Research is an important aspect of sports medicine and you, as a student, can be a part of this evolving field by conducting your own original research. So whether you are interested in metabolic disorders, weight management, sports performance, biomechanics, human behavior, cardiovascular disease, or physiology, just remember that you can be a part of this intellectual process and contribute valuable information to our field. Best of luck on your future research endeavors!

Kimberly Weary, Mid-Atlantic Chapter