



Patient Expectations in Orthopedic Surgery

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This summer I had the privilege of working with orthopedic surgeon Dr. Atul Kamath on the project “Patient Expectations in Orthopedic Surgery.” More specifically, we studied total joint replacement, a type of surgery in which a damaged or worn joint is replaced with prosthetic components. Not much is known about the types of expectations and concerns patients have regarding these surgeries, so this study was designed in order to give healthcare providers a better understanding. In addition, future payment for healthcare providers may depend in part on patient expectations, which makes this study useful.

My role throughout the summer was to work in clinics, administering surveys to patients undergoing total knee or total hip replacement, which asked about their expectations and concerns regarding the operation. Sample questions would include “How much improvement do you expect regarding pain relief?” based off a grade scale, or “How many weeks do you expect to make a full recovery?” I then compiled the patients’ answers and performed statistical tests to identify any trends. Among other findings, perhaps the most prominent was that patients have high expectations regarding the outcome of their surgery – across all demographics, they expect total or substantial improvement.

Through my role as a researcher this summer I was able to develop an understanding of the clinical research process and necessary protocol, and became competent in chart study and data entry. I was also able to further develop communication skills through many interactions with patients, which I truly enjoyed, and also developed my ability to think analytically and with attention to detail. Via the opportunity with Dr. Kamath and PURM I was able to gain unparalleled exposure to a hospital setting, both observing the clinic and surgery, and have strengthened my interest in participating in research throughout the rest of college to supplement my desire to pursue a career in surgery.