

## Is Surgery The Right Career For Me?

A third-year medical student emailed me with some interesting questions asking how one can confirm whether surgery is the right career choice. She said she had just completed a two-week rotation of nights and felt that she handled it well.

How does a student know if surgery is right for her? That's a tough one. I'm afraid that working only 2 weeks of nights, while certainly hard, is a little misleading. Anyone can do 2 weeks of nights. Surgery training is 5 years with a lot of nights, weekends and long days. I think that one of the reasons there is a 25% attrition rate among general surgery residents is that their medical school experience is nothing like what residency really is. [See my blog about this.] Don't forget that it continues when you become an attending. The attending surgeons in private practice where I now work are putting in a lot of hours, sometimes more than 80/week. I'd suggest you take an elective of at least 6 weeks in general surgery as your first 4th year course. Find a good elective in a busy trauma center. If you still like surgery after 6 weeks of doing that, it might be right for you.

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