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UCLA CTSI Research Associates Program: Promoting Clinical Research and Cultivating the Next Generation of Medical Scientists

The UCLA CTSI Research Associates Program's (CTSI-RAP) mission is to foster a new generation of clinical researchers by encouraging undergraduates to experience and contribute to clinical and biomedical research in the health system. Under the mentorship of UCLA faculty, students serve as Research Associates in various clinical studies to help implement clinical trial protocols, recruit patients, collect research documentation, perform data management/analysis, and contribute to co-authoring research papers and publications for dissemination within the UCLA medical community and beyond. Through this role, students gain exposure to multiple fields in medicine and science, network with healthcare professionals, and build skills in patient interaction and research methodology. CTSI-RAP students are able to shadow medical staff at UCLA's Clinical and Translational Research Center (CTRC) to learn more about ongoing research studies, interact with patients under clinician guidance, and observe medical procedures. RAP students shadow physicians on medical rounds to obtain insight into doctor-patient interactions and the vital role of clinical research in enhancing healthcare. Students also experience didactic teaching through weekly meetings in which various ethical issues, clinical research methods and protocols, and different career pathways in healthcare are explored. Overall, CTSI-RAP contextualizes the challenges of modern healthcare and encourages students to directly contribute to innovative biomedical research.