Cedars-Sinai Spine Research Program, 2027–2028
Dr. David Skaggs & Dr. Kenneth Illingworth

Program Overview

The Cedars-Sinai Spine Research Program is a yearlong clinical research program for U.S. MD students taking a dedicated research year between their third and fourth years. The program's primary focus is spine research. Students meet weekly with the program directors, work with multiple attending physicians, and take projects from data analysis through to abstracts, presentations, and manuscripts.

The program is intended for students planning to apply to orthopaedic surgery residency. Two positions are available for 2027–2028.

Program Directors

Dr. David Skaggs – Co-Director, Spine Center; Executive Vice Chair, Department of Orthopaedics; Director of Pediatric Orthopaedics; Director of the Spine Center

Dr. Kenneth Illingworth – Associate Program Director, Orthopaedic Surgery Residency Program; Director of Pediatric Orthopaedic Trauma

Program Details

- **Location:** Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA
- **Dates:** May 2027 – May 2028 (recommended; start date is negotiable)
- **Duration:** 1 year, with the option to extend
- **Positions:** 2
- **Compensation:** $25.00 - $33.51 per hour

Eligibility

Applicants must be students in U.S. MD programs who will take a dedicated research year between their third and fourth years of medical school. International medical graduates and physicians who have already completed medical school are not eligible.

Research Focus

Most projects are in pediatric spine, and much of the work is retrospective clinical research. Students are not limited to a single project or study design. Because they work with several attending physicians, students can take part in a range of projects and gain experience with different research methods over the year.

What Students Do

- Analyze clinical data and write manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals
- Prepare abstracts, posters, and presentations
- Attend weekly research meetings with attendings
- Work with more than 25 faculty, fellows, residents, students, and permanent research staff
- Present research at national orthopaedic surgery and spine conferences, as opportunities arise
- May observe surgical procedures and gain clinical exposure to see the patient care that the research is meant to inform.

Mentorship and Research Output

Dr. Skaggs expects the research year to put students in a strong position to match into orthopaedic surgery, and each student is mentored through the match process.

Historically, researchers in the program have been authors on an average of approximately 15–25 papers. This reflects past outcomes; individual output varies, and it is not a requirement or a guarantee.

How to Apply

Applications are reviewed and interviews are conducted on a rolling basis. Final interviews are held in January.

Send the following to Cristabelle.alexander@cshs.org with the subject line **"Spine Research Program – Last Name, First Name"**:

- One-page cover letter describing your interest in the program
- CV
- One letter of recommendation, sent directly by the recommender