

INTD 6045: Clinical Practicum in Neuroscience

Course Director: David Morilak
16 contact hours, 1 course credit hour; graded S/U

This course will provide students with a brief, but intense and very focused exposure to clinical practice in a relevant area of their choosing, designed and coordinated to best match their interests in close individual collaboration with a clinical mentor in one of the participating components – currently Neurosurgery, Neurology, or Psychiatry. Representative activities could include participation in case presentation and treatment planning, attending rounds with physicians and residents, direct observation of clinical procedures, patient interviews, follow-up care and outcome review. Potential venues may include inpatient psychiatric ward, sleep clinic, epilepsy clinic, stroke clinic, neurosurgical theater and surgical ICU. In consultation with the course director, students will first select one of the following sub-sections, and then design their individually tailored clinical practicum experience with the coordinator for that section.

Neurosurgery Practicum –

Students will be exposed to all common clinical aspects of neurological surgery. Students will have an opportunity to enter the operating room, to observe first hand a variety of neurosurgical procedures performed in the brain, spinal cord or peripheral nerves (amongst others). Weekly didactic conferences, held every Friday, will allow the students to participate in clinical and academic case discussions, including aspects of pre-operative planning (films, photographs, medical records, etc.) and consideration of post-operative results. The students will also have an opportunity to attend rounds in the Neurosurgical Intensive Care Unit, where they will gain insight into state-of-the-art management of critically ill patients. All activities will be directly supervised by Faculty in the Department of Neurosurgery.

Neurology Practicum –

Participants will be involved with diagnosis and treatment of patients with disorders of the central, peripheral and autonomic nervous systems, which may include neurodegenerative disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease), cerebrovascular disease such as transient ischemic attack and stroke, sleep disorders, epilepsy, neuromuscular disorders, movement disorders, multiple sclerosis, infections of the brain and spinal cord, etc. Students will participate in clinical rounds, case presentations, and case strategies. Opportunities include inpatient experiences at University Hospital (Neurology wards, Epilepsy Monitoring Unit, Neurology Consultations), General Neurology outpatient clinics, and specialty clinics such as the sleep, epilepsy, and muscular dystrophy clinics. All activities will be supervised by faculty in the Department of Neurology.

Psychiatry Practicum –

Students will be introduced to diagnosis and treatment of patients with severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, major depressive disorder and substance dependence. Specific skills learned will include suicide risk assessment, mental status assessment, substance use quantification, medication evaluation, and screening for common psychiatric disorders. This will be achieved through active participation in clinical rounds, case presentations, patient interviews and treatment planning. All activities will be supervised by faculty from the Department of Psychiatry, and will take place on the acute psychiatric inpatient unit at University Hospital or the Psychiatry Transitional Care Clinic off campus.

Expectations and Grading

Students are expected to fulfill the required contact hours in 2-3 sessions over the course of the semester. The structure, duration and timing of each student's experience will vary, and is to be arranged with the direct contact person within the division in which they are conducting their practicum. Typically, a session would involve at least several hours of activity per day over a period of days within 1-2 weeks.

Students are to keep a journal documenting all of their activities. At the end of the semester, they will write a 1-2 page summary of their experience during the semester. Students will turn in their journal and their summary document at the end of the semester.

Grading will be S/U, based on attendance and participation, and turning in their written work product.