



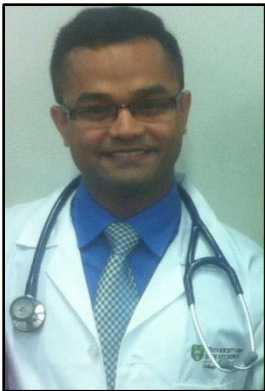
For Immediate Release

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NREF Medical Student Research Fellowship Inspires Next Generation Neurosurgeon

(September 20, 2017 - Rolling Meadows, IL) - The **Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation** (NREF) launched the **Medical Student Summer Research Fellowship** (MSSRF) program in 2008 for the brightest medical students in the United States or Canada to spend a summer of work in a neurosurgical laboratory, mentored by an AANS member sponsor.

The MSSRF program is an investment in the future of neurosurgery, and thanks to a generous contribution from **Aaron Cohen-Gadol, MD, FAANS** of royalties from the sale of the COHEN™ Bipolar Forceps from Kirwan Surgical Products to the Medical Student Summer Research Fund at the NREF, the Foundation was able to increase the number of fellowships awarded from twenty in 2016 to twenty-five in 2017.



Annually, these fellowships are provided to students whose research projects are aimed at the better understanding, treatment, and prevention of neurological disorders and improved patient care. One of those recipients, **Ali Jamal of the University of Saskatchewan** (pictured at left), submitted the following report about the fellowship's impact on his career.

"I would like to express tremendous gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Ivar Mendez at the University of Saskatchewan, and the NREF for this great opportunity. The experience has been invaluable and will lay the groundwork for my future endeavours. We are in search of a stem cell line that is safe, effective and ethically sound to treat the sensorimotor deficits of Parkinson's Disease. For this project, we continued this line of work by investigating directly reprogrammable NeuroProgenitor Cells (drNPCs).

The MSSRF gave me the opportunity to learn from Dr. Mendez, a surgeon-scientist, whom I deeply respect. I gained an appreciation for how much good quality research an MD/PhD can perform. I was able to expand my skills by learning more about the biochemical aspect of the project. Specifically, I had an active role in determining the presence of transplanted cells and their phenotype once the rodent brains were procured.

Outside of the technical knowledge, I was also able to envision myself as a surgeon-scientist. Becoming a neurosurgeon-scientist has always been something I've considered, but without first-hand experience of what is truly possible within the field, I would not have been able to make an informed career decision.

My interest in neurosurgery was fueled by the MSSRF. By pursuing a cure for neurodegenerative diseases, such as Parkinson's Disease, scientists are able to touch the lives of their patients in a way that no other physician is able. It is a true honor to look after the most vital areas within the human body (brain and spine) and I cannot imagine a better calling than taking care of these patients and by pushing the agenda and looking into ways to improve patient outcomes.

I am truly grateful to the NREF for their very significant contributions in my medical education and career development."

Donations to the NREF can be directed to the MSSRF program, to impact next summer's medical students in a way that the fellowship did for Ali Jamal. Visit www.nref.org/Donate

The online grant application portal for 2018 Medical Student Summer Research Fellowships will open November 1, 2017. Awardees will be notified in April 2018.

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About the NREF

The Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation (NREF) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization created in 1980 by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) to support research and education efforts that enhance and confirm the critical role neurosurgeons play in improving lives.

The NREF is dedicated to providing education to neurosurgeons at all stages of their careers, as well as funding research into new and existing neurosurgical treatments, in order to identify links between best practices and improved outcomes in patient care. Through voluntary public donations, corporate support, and donations from allied groups, the NREF supports endeavors that impact the lives of those suffering from epilepsy, stroke, brain tumors, spinal disorders, sports-related head injuries, lower back pain and Parkinson's disease.