



Vascular Surgery Interest Group (V-SIG) Toolkit

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Forward

Vascular surgery is a broad discipline dealing with the large scope of vascular diseases including arterial and venous diseases. Managing such diseases include medical therapy, minimally invasive procedures, and surgical intervention.

Vascular surgery is a versatile and flexible profession and is therefore a platform for innovation in basic and clinical research, as well as surgical education. There is an ever-growing need for young, passionate, and enthusiastic vascular surgeons to tailor to the needs of an aging population at risk for vascular diseases.

The Society for Vascular Surgery® (SVS) is a not-for-profit professional medical society, composed primarily of vascular surgeons, that seeks to advance excellence and innovation in vascular health through education, advocacy, research, and public awareness. SVS is the national advocate for 3,350 specialty-trained vascular surgeons and other medical professionals who are dedicated to the prevention and cure of vascular disease.

Within the SVS, members of the Medical Student Section, General Surgery Resident Section, and the Vascular Surgery Trainee Section form a collection of dedicated students and young surgeons devoted to the promotion of vascular surgery through governing councils and committees, research interest groups, vascular annual meeting planning groups, and many other activities.

As a next step in the national and international promotion of vascular surgery, the development of vascular surgery interest groups is crucial. The following toolkit will facilitate the development of such interest groups and provide a step-by-step planning to make a vascular surgery chapter a reality.

Becoming a SVS Medical Student Liaison

Why become a student liaison?

Interest in vascular surgery is on the rise. Now more than ever, the choice to become a vascular surgeon fulfills an acutely growing need created by the aging population in the United States and beyond. And, with an increasing number of 0+5 integrated vascular residency programs developing around the country starting vascular surgery training right after medical school is becoming a reality for more and more medical students. One key to obtaining a competitive vascular surgery residency position is demonstrating interest in vascular surgery early on in your medical school career.

Becoming an SVS Medical Student Liaison provides leadership experience and the opportunity to work with like-minded students and vascular surgery faculty to increase awareness about careers in vascular surgery, research opportunities, and to engage in community service activities. As a SVS Medical Student Liaison, you will be a key point of contact for interested students at your institution, the SVS office, and other like-minded students across the country.

If you are interested, please email studentresident@vascularsociety.org or call 800-258-7188.

How to start a Vascular Surgery Interest Group Chapter

A dedicated vascular surgery interest group, liaison, or forum can provide students with early exposure to surgery, help students get involved in vascular-related research and service activities earlier in their medical career, and obtain valuable career mentorship.

Creating the right forum for V-SIG

Begin by evaluating if it makes more sense for you (or another student) to become a vascular surgery point person within a larger surgery interest group on campus or to form an entirely new group devoted exclusively to vascular surgery. The answer to this question will depend on the size of your medical school, the number of potentially interested students, the amount of energy required to start a new campus group, and, how much of a presence the surgery interest group has on your campus, if such a group exists. This decision can be discussed amongst other interested students and faculty to come up with an optimal solution.

In some cases there may not be a large enough interest from your student body or your institution may lack important resources (e.g., faculty commitment, funding, etc). Consider teaming up with medical students within your region at other medical schools. The SVS office can help you identify other interested students in your area. Contact studentresident@vascularsociety.org or 800-258-7188 for more information.

Obtaining faculty support

Whether you decided to appoint a vascular surgery point person within a larger surgery interest group on campus, form a regional group, or create a V-SIG, it is critical you have faculty support. Their support is a requisite for success. It is important to identify at least one faculty advisor who has the time, energy, and commitment to facilitate V-SIG related activities. This faculty member can act as a liaison between students and vascular faculty, lead educational programming, help find funding for group activities, offer suggestions for new directions and activities, and can prove instrumental as a group advocate.

A list of designated faculty member can be found on the SVS Web site. If there are no designated faculty mentors at your institution, you should approach a vascular surgery faculty member at your institution. Surgeons can be extremely busy so it may take a few attempts to find the right faculty member. Consider approaching faculty who are known for their interest in student education or who has participated in medical student lectures. When contacting a faculty member express your desire for starting a vascular surgery interest group.

Once you have identified a faculty member, meet and discuss your ideas for what you hope to accomplish in starting a group/liason and how they can contribute – whether that be rallying faculty to help run a suturing workshop, finding funding for food during workshops, or meetings, etc.

Creating interest in a V-SIG chapter

After meeting with faculty and coming up with an action plan, the next step is to hold an informational meeting for students to learn more about vascular surgery, the benefits of V-SIG, as well as to determine what future activities will be of most interest to students. This initial meeting can be instrumental in planning the rest of the year. Be sure to either informally or formally poll students on their interests and suggested activities. To get the desired participation, you'll want to advertise widely with emails to student lists, postings on student web sites, and flyers. While having a faculty member attend the initial meeting would be ideal, it is not necessary.

a) Creating a Facebook group

- ❖ Creating a Facebook group will initially be a great tool for advertising the new V-SIG chapter to all of your medical student colleagues. It will provide an initial network of students with interests in vascular surgery. The online group will further provide promotion and access to the many activities that will be planned by your V-SIG chapter.

b) Creating a Web site

- ❖ Creating a web site will be another great tool for advertising the new V-SIG chapter. There are many free and user-friendly web site creating tools available online (i.e.: <http://www.webs.com/>). On the V-SIG web site, you could provide information concerning the breadth of discipline involved in vascular surgery, the committee members, medical electives in vascular surgery at your university, and a calendar of scheduled events organized by your V-SIG chapter.

Building a V-SIG leadership team

Splitting responsibilities amongst other interested individuals will cut down on stress and will help the group run more smoothly. During the informational meeting and throughout the year try to identify other students interested in taking on leadership roles. Typical roles and responsibilities for surgery interest groups include:

- **Chapter President –**
 - in charge of scheduling and running meetings, which includes setting the agenda for each meeting and for the year;
 - in charge of organizing chapter activities;
 - communicates with officers on a regular basis and delegates responsibilities accordingly;
 - can also serve as SVS Medical Student liaison;
 - works closely with faculty advisor

- **SVS Medical Student Liaison/Vice President –**
 - serves as a SVS medical student liaison keeping track of opportunities offered by SVS and other vascular organization;
 - assists the Chapter president in developing agendas and activities;
 - attends all chapter meetings;
 - works closely with faculty advisor

- **Treasurer –**
 - in charge of fundraising;
 - keeps track of chapter expenses and balance;
 - processes reimbursements

- **Secretary –**
 - in charge of taking written notes during meetings (minutes) and distributing them after each meeting;
 - keeps calendar of chapter events and sends out reminder communications to student group;
 - keeps track of all chapter activities (this will be helpful when transitioning leadership as it will serve as a guide for the following year);
 - writes thank you notes to speakers and invited guests;
 - can also be in charge of creating and maintaining V-SIG web site and designing promotional materials

Registering your V-SIG chapter

Once you have started a V-SIG chapter be sure to register it with the SVS Medical Student Section by emailing studentresident@vascularsociety.org. The SVS office can help you advertise your V-SIG's activities and recruit interested students, as well as connect with your other V-SIG leaders.

Planning your V-SIG year

Obtaining chapter funding

Providing food and refreshments at events can increase attendance! Consider asking for some support from your vascular surgery department. Resources can be shared with a larger surgery interest group, or if your school provides money to support new and active student groups, this may be the best way to fund a new vascular surgery interest group

C.O.R.E. Activities

While vascular surgery may be the primary focus of the group's interest, remember that should not be the only goal. Providing a forum where students can get early exposure to surgery is equally important. Keep this in mind when planning events. Also, don't forget that undergraduate pre-meds may be interested in these activities. SVS has a wealth of resources such as available mentors and speakers, research publications, and can supply V-SIGs with DVDs/PowerPoint presentations, and other materials.

Career

- Invite attendings (in both private practice and academia) and residents to come speak to students on a variety of topics including:
 - ❖ Why vascular surgery?
 - ❖ Research opportunities in vascular surgery
 - ❖ What are the major differences between private practice and academia?
 - ❖ Women in vascular surgery
 - ❖ How to become a competitive 0+5 or 5+2 residency candidate
 - ❖ Pre- and Post-Match panels
 - ❖ Current research in vascular surgery (clinical, basic science, etc)
 - ❖ Case presentations

- Promote mentorship:
 - ❖ Create a formal program of connecting interested students with faculty
 - ❖ Faculty/Resident/Student mixers/dinners
 - ❖ Help set-up shadowing experiences (OR, clinics, wards)

Outreach

- Help run a health table at a local health fair or other suitable venue
 - ❖ Topics that can be addressed include:
 - ❖ Smoking cessation
 - ❖ Stroke prevention
 - ❖ Abdominal aortic aneurysm awareness
 - ❖ Importance of diet and exercise
 - ❖ Diabetes screening
 - ❖ Hypertension screening
 - ❖ Peripheral arterial disease screening (Get good practice doing Ankle- Brachial Indices (ABI)! You'll be a pro by the start of residency.)
 - ❖ Venous disease screening and information (including varicose veins, stasis dermatitis, stasis ulcers)
 - ❖ Breakthroughs in vascular surgery research: basic and clinical research topics

- Provide vascular-related services at a local free clinic. This can be used as a service and educational opportunity.
 - ❖ Consider having faculty teach students how to screen for AAA using Doppler ultrasound and provide this service to older patients
 - ❖ Attempt proactive screening for venous disease
 - ❖ Will provide opportunities for students to practice a complete cardiovascular exam on each patient
 - ❖ Again, another chance to get practice calculating ABIs

- Consider applying for an American Medical Association Foundation Healthy Living Grant in the areas of Nutrition/Physical Fitness or Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Smoking Prevention. Consider applying in conjunction with students interested in Cardiology and getting departmental support by coming up with ideas that can be implemented locally or regionally. Find more information at: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation/our-programs/public-health/healthy-living-grants.shtml>

Research

- Visit the Student/Resident/Trainee section of the SVS Web site (<http://www.vascularweb.org/studentsresidentstrainees/Pages/default.aspx>) to find research opportunities you can post to email lists

- Journal clubs
- Solicit research opportunities from faculty and provide information for interested students

Education

- Rounds with the Chief of Vascular Surgery
- Shadow clinical experiences
- Attend vascular operations
- Journal clubs
- Scrubbing workshops
- Suturing skills workshop
- Vascular anastomoses workshop
- Simulation labs
- Anatomy sessions
- Non-invasive vascular lab
- Organize study groups
- Create a vascular surgery rotation tip sheet

Social Events

- Dinner with faculty members and/or vascular residents

Tips on running a V-SIG chapter

Communication is key!

- Consider starting a vascular-specific email list or sending out information via the surgery interest group email list, if one exists.

Plan regular meetings

- This can ensure momentum continues throughout the year. Meetings can be held monthly, each semester, or quarterly.

Create a list of goals and monthly/yearly activities

- This can help with setting agendas for each meeting, delegating responsibilities as needed, providing a plan of activities that group members can look forward to, and helping to ensure that the year will be a productive one.

Make sure events aren't scheduled during stressful time periods (e.g. exam blocks)

- No explanation needed!

Try not to pack too much or too little into the year

- Medical students are busy people so be aware of others' time constraints. At the same time, if you schedule too few events, you may lose chapter momentum and enthusiasm.

Continue to recruit students throughout the year

- Don't just send emails to group members. Continue to advertise events to the wider student body.

Web sites and resources

SVS Student/Resident/Trainees Section

<http://www.vascularweb.org/studentsresidentstrainees/Pages/default.aspx>

The Association for Surgical Education Student Interest Groups section

<http://www.surgicaleducation.com/mc/page.do?sitePageId=33846&orgId=ase>

UCSF's Surgery Interest Group (well done web site example)

<http://sig.surgery.ucsf.edu/>

FREIDA (search for the latest vascular surgery programs)

<https://freida.ama-assn.org/Freida/user/viewProgramSearch.do>

NRMP Match Statistics

<http://www.nrmp.org/data/index.html>

Choosing a career in surgery

<http://www.facs.org/residencysearch/>

Peripheral Vascular Surgical Society

<http://www.pvss.org/>

General medical student web sites

<http://www.studentdoc.com/>

<http://www.studentdoctor.net/>