

Comprehensive Analysis of Research Output Among Matched Integrated Plastic Surgery Applicants in the 2025-2026 Cycle

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INTRODUCTION: Research output among matched integrated plastic surgery applicants has escalated, yet prior work has focused on publication volume or restricted analysis to plastic and reconstructive surgery (PRS) publications alone. We characterized the full research portfolios of matched applicants in the 2025-2026 cycle.

METHODS: Matched applicants were identified from public match lists and verified against institutional sources. Publications through July 2026 were identified in PubMed, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar; conference abstracts were excluded. Publications were classified by field, PRS subspecialty, applicant authorship position, and database use. Citation counts were obtained from Scopus. Descriptive analyses were performed in RStudio.

RESULTS: Of 233 matched applicants, 230 had at least 1 publication, yielding 3,181 publication records and 2,650 unique publications. Applicants averaged 13.7 ± 13.9 publications (median of 10; range 0-114). PRS accounted for 62.8% of publications, led by craniofacial (22.8%) and breast (22.6%) subspecialties. The remaining 37% comprised other clinical specialties, basic science, and non-specialty topics. Median author position was 2, and applicants were middle authors on 68.0% of records and first authors on 31.1%. Database studies represented 8.3% of output, most commonly NSQIP and TriNetX. Median Scopus citation counts declined from 20 for 2019 publications to 1 for 2025 publications.

CONCLUSION: More than one-third of output among 2025-2026 matched applicants falls outside plastic surgery, which analyses limited to plastic surgery do not capture. Publication volume alone may insufficiently characterize applicant research portfolios, underscoring the need for more nuanced evaluation metrics.