



Committee on Advanced Subspecialty Training (CAST) Society of Neurological Surgeons

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR FELLOWSHIP EDUCATION **IN PERIPHERAL NERVE SURGERY**

I. INTRODUCTION

- **Eligibility**

Fellowship programs that exist within the structure of an ACGME accredited residency in neurologic surgery (or the Canadian equivalent), or within an NIH designated comprehensive cancer center (or the Canadian equivalent) may apply for accreditation through the Committee on Accreditation of Subspecialty Training of The Society of Neurological Surgeons

- **Definition and Scope of the Subspecialty**

Peripheral nerve surgery (PNS) is that subspecialty of neurosurgery that deals with the evaluation and medical and surgical treatment of diseases of the peripheral nerve. It includes, but is not limited to, the evaluation and medical and surgical treatment of patients with traumatic nerve injuries, entrapment neuropathies (e.g. CTS, cubital tunnel syndrome, etc.) and mass lesions associated with peripheral nerves (e.g. tumors and cysts). PNS also includes distinguishing surgically treatable peripheral nerve problems from primary peripheral neuropathies and those secondary to systemic diseases such as diabetes.

- **Duration of Training**

- Post-graduate fellowships: Prior to beginning a CAST-accredited neurological surgery subspecialty fellowship, each fellow candidate will have satisfactorily completed an ACGME accredited residency training program in neurologic surgery (or the Canadian/international equivalent).
- Enfolded fellowships: If a candidate is pursuing an enfolded CAST-accredited fellowship during their residency, that fellowship training should occur at the appropriate senior level of residency allowable as valid by the corresponding Joint Section(s) together with CAST. Prior to beginning their fellowship, the resident participant must already have a broad exposure to the full spectrum of neurosurgery with sufficient senior level clinical experience to warrant a focused experience to build upon his/her already acquired skills. It is anticipated that any fellow should already have both the technical expertise and intellectual maturity to understand and apply the material available in subspecialty training (Milestone Level 4). With that specific goal in mind, the term "senior level" has been defined by the SNS so as to occur after the successful completion of the Chief Resident year.



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- All new and renewal CAST-accredited fellowship applications approved during the coming year and thereafter will be obligated to comply with these guidelines and adhere to the new annual updates of the fellowship program (Form A/ACGME ADS communications) along with specific training details of each individual graduating fellow completing that program (Form 3).
 - The standard length of fellowships will be of twelve (12) months duration. Since all fellowship applications will be reviewed by the accrediting bodies defined above, an application at variance from the standard must provide convincing evidence of its ability to satisfy the educational needs defined by the CAST.
- **Broad Description of the Objectives/Goals of Education in the Fellowship**
- The fellowship training must provide broad educational experience in PNS which will complement that training in the neurosurgery residency to promote further acquisition of knowledge and skills in the subspecialty.
 - A minimum of three months of the fellowship training must be spent in a clinical PNS experience under the direction of specified clinical faculty. This period of time must provide the trainee with an organized, comprehensive, supervised, full time educational experience in the field of PNS. This should include comprehensive patient care, diagnostic modalities, the performance of surgical procedures, and the integration of non-operative and surgical therapies into clinical patient management.
 - Each fellowship should provide a broad exposure to clinical evaluation and appropriate patient selection for operative and non-operative management in both the inpatient and outpatient settings.
 - Each fellow should actively participate in the operative management of a wide range of peripheral nerve and plexus disorders including traumatic, neoplastic and entrapment conditions. Progressive responsibility in patient management should be provided. Exposure to neurotization techniques is considered an integral part of PNS fellowship experience and training.
 - Clinical, anatomic, and neuroscience research constitute an integral component of the educational experience and provision should be made for the successful completion of research projects. A full time experience in research will require an extension of the fellowship beyond the basic three to six months of clinical training.

II. INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION



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- **The Sponsoring Program and Institution**
 - The sponsoring neurosurgical residency program and its affiliated institutions must provide sufficient breadth and depth of operative procedures in peripheral nerve surgery to sustain fellowship training. Additionally there must be faculty, financial resources, research, and laboratory facilities to meet the educational needs of the fellowship trainee and to enable the program to comply with the requirements of accreditation.
 - Recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of comprehensive care for patients with complex peripheral nerve conditions, it is required that within the institution(s) of the fellowship there shall exist clinical facilities and faculty in neuroradiology, neurology, clinical neurophysiology, orthopedics, and rehabilitation medicine.
 - Support for the fellowship program by the sponsoring department/division of neurosurgery must be demonstrated in writing by the program chair at the time of application for or renewal of accreditation.

Participating Institutions

- Participating institutions shall be limited to those necessary for a complete fellowship experience.
 - In most instances the PNS fellowship will occur at a single institution. Depending on local circumstances, training may be spent at additional institutions which may provide special resources for training. Each of these institutions must be located within reasonably close proximity for interactions with the teaching programs of the sponsoring program.
 - The primary teaching staff must be members of the faculty of the sponsoring program.
- **Appointment of Fellows**
 - In general only one fellowship position per training program will be allowed at on Accreditation of Subspecialty Training. In determining the merit of additional fellowship positions, the Committee will consider:
 - The presence of a faculty of national stature in PNS.
 - The quality of the educational program.



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- The quality of clinical care.
- The total number and spectrum of cases.
- The quality of clinical and research programs.
- Facilities.
- The quality of fellows trained by the program.
- The impact of fellows on the clinical and educational experience of the neurosurgical residents within a sponsoring program.
- Selection of candidates for the fellowship position must be consonant with the criteria established by the sponsoring program. The fellowship director must adhere to the criteria for fellowship eligibility that are specified in this document.
- A high rate of fellowship attrition from a program may adversely affect the fellowship accreditation status.

III. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Fellowship Director Qualifications**
 - The fellowship director must be appointed by and be responsible to the chair of the sponsoring neurologic surgery residency or fellowship program.
 - The fellowship director shall be a neurologic surgeon who possesses special expertise in the evaluation and surgical, medical management of peripheral nerve problems and whose practice is concentrated in the area of PNS.
 - The fellowship director should be certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery or possess equivalent qualifications as judged by the RRC for Neurological Surgery.
- **Responsibilities of the Fellowship Director**

The fellowship director must assume responsibility for the training program and devote sufficient time to the educational program including the following:



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- Preparation of a written curriculum outlining the educational goals of the program with respect to knowledge, skills, and other attributes to be attained during the fellowship. This statement must be distributed to the fellow and members of the teaching staff and be available for review.
- Selection of fellows in accordance with institutional and departmental/division policies.
- Selection and supervision of the teaching staff and other program personnel at the institution(s) participating in the program.
- The supervision of the fellow through explicit written directives relative to responsibilities in patient care as well as supervisory lines. These guidelines must be communicated to all members of the program faculty. Fellows must be provided with prompt, reliable systems for communication and interaction with supervisory physicians.
- Regular evaluation of the fellow's knowledge, skills, and overall performance, including the development of professional attitudes.
- The fellowship director, with participation of members of the teaching staff, shall:
 - Evaluate the knowledge, skills, and professional growth of the fellow using appropriate criteria and procedures.
 - Communicate each evaluation to the fellow in a timely manner.
 - Advance fellows to positions of increasing responsibility on the basis of satisfactory progression in patient management, scholarship and professional growth
 - Maintain a permanent record of evaluations of each fellow and have it accessible to the fellow and other authorized personnel.
 - Provide a written final evaluation for the fellow on completion of the program. This evaluation must include a review of the fellow's performance during the final period of training and verification of the fellow's demonstrated professional abilities and competence for independent practice. This final evaluation should be part of the fellow's permanent record maintained by the institution.
 - Implement all procedures, as established by the sponsoring institution, regarding academic discipline and complaints or grievances pertinent to the fellowship trainees.



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- Monitor fellow's stress, including mental or emotional conditions affecting performance or learning and drug or alcohol-related dysfunction. Fellowship directors and teaching staff should be sensitive to the need for timely provision of confidential counseling and psychological support services to the fellow. Training situations that consistently produce undesirable stress on the fellow must be evaluated and modified.

- Prepare accurate statistical and narrative descriptions of the program as required by the CAST

- Notify CAST regarding major programmatic changes.

- **Other Teaching Faculty Qualifications and Number**

- All clinical faculty members who are neurologic surgeons shall be certified by, or be in the certification process of, the American Board of Neurological Surgery or possess equivalent qualifications as judged by the RRC for Neurological Surgery.

- The primary teaching staff should be based at the sponsoring institution or its affiliated hospitals and maintain a close affiliation with teaching staff within the program.

- All members of the teaching staff must demonstrate a strong interest in the education of fellows, sound clinical and teaching abilities, support of the goals and objectives of the fellowship, a commitment to their own continuing medical education, and participation in scholarly activities.

- If multiple institutions are approved for participation in the fellowship program, a member of the teaching staff at each participating institution must be specifically designated to assume responsibility for the day-to-day activities of the fellowship at that institution with overall coordination by the fellowship director.

- The faculty must have regular documented meetings to review the fellowship training, the financial and administrative support of the fellowship, the volume and variety of patients available for educational purposes, the performance of members of the teaching staff, and the quality of fellowship supervision.

- **Other Personnel**

Fellowships must be provided with the additional professional, technical, and clerical personnel needed to support the administration and educational conduct of the fellowship.

IV. LOGISTICS OF TRAINING

- **The Educational Program**



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- All educational components of the fellowship should be related to the specified goals and must not interfere with the training opportunities of residents who may be members of a sponsoring neurosurgical residency program.
- The fellowship program and/or structure must be reviewed for re-accreditation by the Committee on Subspecialty Training of The Society of Neurological Surgeons.

- **Clinical Components**

- A minimum of three months of fellowship training must be spent in clinical activities in PNS.
- The responsibility or independence given to fellows in patient care must be dependent upon the fellow's demonstrated knowledge, manual skills, experience in the complexity of the patient's illness, as well as the perceived risks of the surgical management
- A portion of the fellowship experience should be allocated to training in an outpatient clinic or office setting that provides preoperative, perioperative and postoperative continuity of patient care

V. OTHER COMPONENTS

- The fellowship program should provide opportunities for the fellow to engage in research relative to the subspecialty.
- The fellow should actively participate in scholarly activities and should contribute to the education of neurosurgery residents and medical students.
- The fellowship program should have regular dedicated teaching conferences with participation of the fellow, the associated faculty, and residents of the sponsoring program. Participation of other affiliated disciplines should be encouraged.

VI. FELLOWSHIP POLICIES

Supervision

- All patient care services must be supervised by appropriately qualified faculty in accordance with institutional guidelines.
- The fellow who has completed an accredited neurosurgery residency program may function independently as a junior staff neurosurgeon consistent with institutional and



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departmental/division policies.

- The fellowship director must insure direct and document proper supervision of the fellow at all times by attending physicians with appropriate experience for the severity and complexity of the patient's condition. The fellowship trainee must be provided with rapid, reliable systems for communication with supervisors.

Maintenance of Case Logs

- The fellowship program director must maintain accurate case logs of the spinal neurosurgery case material operated annually within the institution and the subspecialty experience of the graduating chief resident throughout his training as well as that of the fellow.
- The fellow must maintain an accurate prospective case log of his/her operative cases throughout the fellowship which documents all operative cases and the level of responsibility in the case (assistant versus primary surgeon).

Evaluations

- As specified in IIIB, 5 and 6, there shall be written evaluations and constructive discussions of the fellow by the faculty relative to performance and accomplishments of stated goals. These evaluations must occur at a minimum of two times per year and maintained in a permanent file.
- The fellow shall provide an evaluation of the faculty and fellowship program. This may be submitted either to the fellowship or program director at completion of the fellowship training. This evaluation should be maintained in a permanent file for review by the CAST if requested.

Duty Hours and Conditions of Work

- Duty hours and work conditions for subspecialty fellows must be consistent with ACGME institutional and program requirements for residency training in neurological surgery.