

Why Neurology?

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20 Neurologists Offer Reasons Why They Chose to Enter the Specialty

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"Neurology is, in my opinion, the most interesting medical specialty. It is a clinical specialty heavily reliant on an ability to take a good history and perform an accurate examination. The diagnostic challenges are particularly enjoyable, frequently requiring one to venture beyond the usual diagnostic algorithms to consider more rare and exciting possibilities. Equally enjoyable is the ability to treat patients with an array of therapeutic options to transform previously devastating disorders into manageable conditions. This is also an evolving specialty with huge potential for future discovery."¹

Dr. David Bourke

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"I went into medical school debating between orthopedic surgery and neurology -- two very different specialties. I liked the diseases of the brain and the process of assessing a patient with a neurological problem. I thought neurology would hold my interest and challenge me better than anything else that I had experienced in medical school."²

Dr. Brad Racette

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"Neurology is a fascinating field on the cusp of medical development. There have been huge advancements over the past few decades with the field evolving to such a point that many new treatments are emerging for diseases previously deemed untreatable. Neurology advances the understanding of human thought, intelligence, emotion, senses, movement, and behavior as well as dealing with many debilitating illnesses of the nervous system. To us, Neurology is the true frontier of medicine. Neurology is a unique subspecialty. One can localize a disease simply based on a good history and physical examination. The art of neurology is deeply rooted in an accurate history and physical examination leading to a diagnosis, which guides the treatment plan. In training and practice, you will face various challenges. The dynamic practice requires excellent interpersonal skills and meticulous observation abilities. Neurology offers the best opportunity to work in a team environment and offers abundant opportunity for interaction with colleagues from a wide range of medical specialties."³

University of Alberta

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“Neurology is applied neuroscience, which holds the key to understand human nature and behavior. Interesting neurological cases during medical school and encouragement by several neurology professors motivated me further to pursue a career in Neurology.”⁴

Dr. Ergun Uc

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“The brain is the most interesting organ in the body. I was attracted to the challenge of understanding how it works and curing diseases that affect it. Patients with disorders of the nervous system often present with unusual symptoms and signs and can be challenging and fun to diagnose. There are already treatments for many of these patients. Recent progress in developing treatments for others has been astounding, and is continuing at a pace much faster than most fields in medicine. It is exciting to be part of that progress and to try to contribute to it. It is also gratifying to be able to treat patients with neurological diseases that other physicians either do not recognize or don't understand well enough to know how to manage. I was initially attracted to neurology because of my research interests, but quickly found that the clinical practice of neurology is fun, challenging and rewarding.”⁵

Dr. George Richerson

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“I decided to become a neurologist because of my strong belief that the nervous system and the brain, in particular, is most important in determining who we are as individuals and how we perceive and experience the world around us. I wanted to dedicate my effort to understanding and preserving its functioning and health.”⁶

Dr. Elena Robinson

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“During my year in Greece, I had the privilege of meeting a prominent Greek Neurologist, Spyros Skarpalezos. We spent a great deal of time discussing neurology. Then during my 1st year as an intern, I met another neurologist, Miran Salgado, who explained to me the spiritual aspect of neurology. You see, neurology deals directly with the brain, the brain and the mind are inseparable, and the mind plays an important role in all healing. So, while as a doctor I could help people, as a neurologist I could maybe

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discover how my patients could use their own minds to help in their own healings. Neurology allows me not only to understand how my patient's brain is functioning, but also gives me the opportunity to study and experiment with my own brain.”⁷

Dr. Cristian Enescu

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“I am a person who always asks questions and soon after arriving in medical school, I discovered that the nervous system was the area of medicine with the most questions and fewest answers. I wanted to know more. Using the neurological exam to localize the problem is unique to neurology and something that enticed me to the specialty. Establishing the cause of the neurological deficit is more difficult. I have entered neurology residency to become proficient at determining what is the location and etiology of the neurological disease afflicting the patient.”⁸

Dr. Eoin Flanagan

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“I wouldn't particularly recommend my route to medicine and neurology. I had brain surgery as a teenager and while this was a trying experience, I ended up healthy and with a great appreciation for medicine and in particular the brain and nervous system. Now as I continue my clinical training, the breadth and depth of neurology continues to amaze me and I find neurology patients to be some of the most endearing.”⁹

Dr. Elizabeth Coon

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“I decided to become a neurologist when I was in medical school. I was impressed with the complexity of the neurologic examination and the methods used to arrive at a diagnosis. Because I like to be challenged, I chose to pursue neuromuscular disorders during my residency.”¹⁰

Dr. Hani Kushlaf

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“Neurology is a field where exact diagnoses can still be made on the basis of history gathering and the physical examination. In an era of ever-expanding technology, there is an elegance in being able to figure out what is wrong with your patient without resorting to tests. The human nervous system is incredibly detailed and controls the essence of what makes us human beings. It is thus a distinct privilege to be able to study, teach and practice neurology.”¹¹

Dr. Ralph Jozefowicz

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“Neurologic disease impacts patients unlike anything else in medicine, unexpectedly robbing the fundamental characteristics of their humanity. The patient may be left with any given spectrum of disability, from a complete change in demeanor and personality, to disabling breathlessness and inability to swallow food and water. I was attracted to Neurology by this very challenge, where diagnosis frequently rests in the clinical skill of the practitioner, and not on any routine diagnostic test. Likewise, the management is often challenging and dependent on knowledge of basic science, clinical and ethical judgment, and a strong bond between the clinician and patient. I love these daily challenges which Neurology presents, and find caring for patients with neurologic disease to be incredibly rewarding.”¹²

Dr. Jonathan Smith

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“Working as a physician is frequently challenging and stimulating, and always rewarding. That said, I find neurology to be the most fascinating field as we have so much yet to learn about how the mind works and how the body functions. Therefore we have much to learn about ourselves. I feel that no other field is so young in terms of how much ground we have left to cover. The potential benefits of unlocking those secrets are enormous.”¹³

Dr. Katherine Riordan

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“One of the things that appeals is that neurology is a very wide ranging specialty. Within the specialty there is quite a large range of different presentations and illnesses. It is a bit of a detective story – you have your clues and you have your tests. Some questions are quite straightforward and some are much more difficult, and you are trying to piece it all together.”¹⁴

Dr. Robert Weeks

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“Like so many others, I was drawn to medicine to challenge myself while making a positive difference for others. Each case in neurology offers a stimulating puzzle. Solving the riddle is intellectually rewarding, and the further treatment I can offer in neurology can greatly improve the lives of patients and their families. The complexity of the human nervous system never ceases to amaze me.”¹⁵

Dr. Greg Thaera

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“I developed a keen interest in science, especially biology, during high school and college thanks to inspirational teachers. My path toward medicine and neurology was a winding one, but this career seems best suited to combining my scientific curiosity with my desire to interact with people one-on-one, providing education, guidance and support. Neurology, in particular, is a field that is evolving quickly as we unravel the mysteries of neural pathways and physiology. I am excited at the prospect of helping translate our burgeoning knowledge of neuroscience into improved patient care.”¹⁶

Dr. Kristine Ziemba

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“Neurology was my first clinical rotation in medical school. I don't think I seriously considered neurology before that, and I don't think I ever seriously considered any other specialty afterward. The neurologists I worked with on my rotation really loved what they did, and their enthusiasm was what motivated me the most — and the cases we saw were fascinating, as well. One time, we were able to localize a lesion because the room was extremely warm and we noticed giant beads of sweat on the patient's forehead that stopped exactly at the midline. It was all perfectly logical, of course, but there is also a magical quality about these kinds of cases, which I love.”¹⁷

Dr. Doris Leung

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“One of the things I like about neurology is it is still very dependent on being able to take a good history and do a very good physical exam. That hasn't gone away, despite all the fancy imaging. Technology hasn't replaced it. Even though we can take stunning pictures of the brain in an MRI scan, we still learn from the physical exam where problem has to be, and even if an MRI doesn't show it at first, a later MRI often does show a problem just where we thought it would be based on the history and examination.”¹⁸

Dr. Daniel Birnbaum

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"One of the aspects that attracted me to neurology was the puzzle-solving, the mystery-solving, the diagnosis. There are mysteries in all areas of medicine, but traditionally it has been especially true of neurology."¹⁹

Dr. Harold Klawans

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"I have often been asked about why I chose to be a neurologist. My interest in the area began in medical school when I realized that although the anatomy of the brain was both fascinating and mysterious, it was also logical. Each part had a function and each function could be tested on clinical exam. In some ways, being a neurologist was like being a sleuth. Agatha Christie's detective, Poirot, said it best, "one must use the little gray cells" in trying to find the answers. The clues are in the story the patient tells."²⁰

Dr. Aline Jelalian

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