

NEUROSURGERY FAQs

What advice would you give about getting letters of recommendation in your specialty?

In neurosurgery, letters of recommendation are very important as this is a very small specialty. It is best for a student to get involved with the department early on in many different ways such as performing research, attending neurosurgical conferences, and shadowing in the clinic or operating room. As the student gets more and more involved, his or her letter of recommendation can become more personal and unique to allow the student to allow him or her to stand out from other applicants. Another important way to secure a good letter is to do an acting-internship rotation on Neurosurgery Service.

What is the value of doing audition rotations in your specialty?

Audition rotations are very important in neurosurgery. Most applicants look similar in regards to Step scores, GPA, and other extracurricular activities. One of the few ways for a student to demonstrate their work characteristics and knowledge base is a rotation with the department. During a rotation, a medical student will be involved in all aspects of patient care from clinic, inpatient, and the operating room. A student will also get to know the field better: the challenges with which neurosurgical patients presented, the benefits patients derived from life-changing neurosurgical procedures, and the variety of neurological diseases.

To what extent does research, publications, or presentations affect one's ability to match in your specialty?

Neurosurgery is one of the more academic specialties compared to other surgical specialties. Research, publications, and presentations are highly regarded. Extensive research and publications will help a medical student stand out and prepare him or her to continue research endeavors as a resident.


Is a Step 2CK score needed before you will invite someone for an interview?

Although a Step 2 CK score is not required prior to interview, it is recommended students take this test early. A Step 2 CK score is considered prior to ranking an applicant in this specialty.

What does the perfect applicant look like in your specialty?


The perfect applicant needs to show a true interest and passion in providing the best neurosurgical care to our patients. In addition to strong letters of recommendation, Step scores, and GPA, an applicant needs to show altruism and excellent time

management skills. The perfect applicant is a great team player as well as an excellent leader who leads by examples, a scholar who enjoys reading and publishing papers.


Does having a below average Step 1 score doom you in your specialty? 

The Step 1 score is one of many things that are considered before selecting students to interview and ultimately rank in the match process. Although a strong Step 1 score is preferred, a below average Step 1 score does not necessary doom the applicant. It does put the applicant at a disadvantage in getting invitation for interviews from many programs.

Would you ever take someone with a Step 2CS failure?

Each student will be evaluated in many different ways. A student with a failing Step 2 CS score may still be considered for interview if he or she retakes Step 2 CS with a passing score. 

Does a student need to Honor in your specialty in order to match?

A student does not need to honor in this specialty to match. 

The students have significant elective time during their 2nd and 3rd year for career exploration.

-What electives would you recommend to a student who knows they are interested in your specialty?

Students need to rotate in Neurosurgery on a TX A&M Campus. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to take at least two other neurosurgery electives at other institutions prior to applying to residency.

-What electives would you recommend to a student who is undecided but considering your specialty?

Students must take a neurosurgery rotation if considering applying to this specialty. This is the only way for students to determine if neurosurgery is the right fit for them.

Is there anything else I haven't asked that you feel an applicant to your specialty ought to know?

Most successful applicants have a relentless fascination with the brain, the spinal cord and the rest of nervous system and have the strong desire to make meaningful and tangible differences in patients' lives. They look forward to the rigors of a seven-year neurosurgical residency and development of close relationships with life-long colleagues

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and life-long mentors. They plan to pursue a career in neurosurgery with a sense of pride, integrity, honesty, sacrifice, and dedication.