

ABPNS | ABNS Update

The American Board of Pediatric Neurological Surgery (ABPNS) was established in 1996 by a dedicated group of pediatric neurosurgeons to identify and recognize subspecialty practice and expertise in pediatric neurosurgery at a time when organized neurosurgery refused to identify subspecialization. In order to establish and codify the optimal training and practice requirements for pediatric neurosurgeons, 40 senior pediatric neurosurgeons from the U.S. and Canada met in Chicago in the summer of 1991. By unanimous vote, they founded the ABPNS, and the original 152 Diplomates were certified in 1996. Since that time, a total of 283 neurosurgeons have been certified, and many of the original group have recertified for the third time. The Board is recognized by hospital and insurance credentialing bodies and our Diplomates are active across neurosurgery.

Times have changed. The American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS) is now committed to identifying subspecialties in neurosurgery and recognizes that the model for subspecialty credentialing created by the ABPNS should be embraced. The Committee on Advanced Subspecialty Training (CAST) has also acknowledged that the Accreditation Council for Pediatric Neurosurgical Fellowships (ACPNF) requirements for and mechanisms of monitoring of fellowships training will remain and is the model for subspecialty fellowship training. In addition, both the ABNS and CAST will defer to the ABPNS and ACPNF regarding the credentialing of pediatric neurosurgeons credentialed by the Canadian Royal College.

Therefore, in an effort to improve and streamline the certification and continued certification processes, the ABPNS Board of Directors has signed a memorandum of understanding with the ABNS that will allow the two organizations to work together. The strength of the two organizations will come together toward the shared goals of an efficient, effective and educational credentialing and re-credentialing process. This transition will take place over the next several years, as the processes for certification of pediatric neurosurgeons evolves. Although many of the details are still in development, the Board of Directors wanted to provide a broad outline of the planned changes to our Diplomates and over the next several months will continue to fill in the details of the process as it evolves. Periodic updates will be added to the ABPNS.org Board website. It will remain the place to look for details of the certification and re-certification processes.

The initial pediatric neurosurgery subspecialty exam will be taken within one year of completing an ACPNF accredited pediatric neurosurgery fellowship and will be available to those that have completed accredited training in neurosurgery recognized by the ABNS or Canadian Royal College. The applicant will then submit case logs from their post-fellowship practice demonstrating a pediatric neurosurgery-focused practice in compliance with ABNS/ABPNS criteria and, once approved, will take a combined ABNS/ABPNS oral examination. There will be a transition period over the next several years, allowing those that have already graduated, but not yet taken the ABNS exam, to sit for the ABPNS written exam. The exam will be given electronically at ABNS testing sites, but the content will still be developed by the ABPNS.

The current ABNS Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process and the ABPNS re-certification process will evolve into a unified system of continuing education that focuses on core concepts and advancements that alter the fundamentals of practice. The goal is to have a single process that is valuable to Diplomates and focuses on continued learning in our ever-evolving field and is specific to the practice of pediatric neurosurgery. Those re-certifying will still meet case log requirements verifying pediatric-focused practice. The educational material that will be the core of this new process is still under development and therefore those recertifying in 2017 will still be subject to the original ABPNS exam process.

In addition, in order to better align the ABNS and ABPNS categories of certification, the ABPNS now recognizes those who have retired from our field as well as those who are clinically inactive. Information regarding these categories of certification are available at the [ABPNS website](#).

John Ragheb, MD, FAANS