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Neurosurgery EXPERT

Q: What are some of the medical issues a neurosurgeon can treat?

A: When people hear the term “neurosurgery,” they automatically think of the brain. While brain surgery is certainly a large part of a neurosurgeon’s practice, these specialists are also trained to treat patients suffering from back and neck pain as well as other serious illnesses ranging from epilepsy to Parkinson’s disease.

People are often surprised to learn that neurosurgeons are also spine specialists. There are only 3,500 board-certified neurosurgeons in the United States, and of those, more than 80 percent specialize in spine surgery. Neurosurgeons provide both conservative (nonsurgical care) and surgical care, depending on the nature of the illness or injury.

Selecting the right Neurosurgeon for Brain Tumors

When your medical condition indicates the need for a neurosurgeon, it’s critical to select a surgeon who is appropriately trained in brain tumor surgery, including advanced microneurosurgical techniques. The surgeon should have the image-guided neuronavigation tools for surgery. Participation in clinical trials available with new treatment options for patients with specific tumors is a plus. The neurosurgeon you choose should also have collaboration with neurooncologists and radiation oncologists for appropriate postoperative care when indicated.

Selecting the right Neurosurgeon for Spine Disorders

Your neurosurgeon should be trained in the latest and most advanced spinal techniques, as spinal surgery is constantly changing. The surgeon must have the ability to offer microsurgical techniques (minimally invasive), motion-sparing technology such as artificial discs, dynamic stabilization, and numerous other available techniques. Each spine patient is unique and should have a treatment protocol to his or her own specific disorder. Therefore, it’s helpful to select a surgeon who can offer both surgical and non-surgical treatment options.

Dallas’ own Dr. Rob Dickerman is board certified in neurosurgery and has extensive training in both conservative (non-surgical) and surgical options for treating a variety of patients with acute spinal conditions. He has personally treated numerous elite professional athletes through conservative and surgical methods that meet each individual’s needs.

WHAT DO NEUROSURGEONS TREAT?

Neurosurgery is the specialty concerned with the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of disorders affecting the spine, brain, and nervous system. This also encompasses disorders of the brain and skull; disorders of cranial and spinal nerves; disorder of the pituitary gland; and disorders of the spinal cord and vertebral column. Some of the specific disorders neurosurgeons treat include:

- Tumors of the brain and spinal cord
- Aneurysms
- Chiari malformations
- Cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, spasticity
- Cervical spine disorders
- Chronic back and neck pain
- Epilepsy
- Herniated disk
- Hydrocephalus
- Lumbar spinal stenosis
- Pituitary tumors
- Sciatica
- Thoracic spine disorders
- Spinal instability