University of Utah
Department of Neurosurgery
Skull Base Fellowship Description
Revised January 23, 2012

Program Demographics:
University of Utah
Department of Neurosurgery
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Department Chair and Skull Base Fellowship Program Director:
William T. Couldwell, M.D., Ph.D.
Alternate Program Contact: Julie Service, Residency and Fellowship Coordinator, (801) 587-8338.

History: The Skull Base Fellowship received approval from our GMEC in May of 2003, with the first fellow in 2006-2007 and a graduate every year since. There have been five past graduates.

Duration: The Fellowship is expected to be for one year.

Qualifications: The candidate will be a fully trained Neurosurgeon, who is eligible for a Utah medical license, or has passed Parts I and II of the USMLE examination, has an ECFMG certificate, and will apply for a J-1 visa if needed.

Fellow Selection: Initial contact from potential applicants is made through letters of inquiry or from email and internet sources. Upon receipt of an initial inquiry, any questions are answered and applicants are directed to the departmental website for more information as well as to download an application.

After completion and review of the application by the Program Director, the Program Coordinator contacts the applicant to arrange a time for them to visit the Program. Interviews are usually done on a Tuesday and Wednesday so that applicants can attend Wednesday morning Neurosurgery Conferences. During their visit, applicants interview with appropriate neurosurgery and otolaryngology faculty as well as the current fellow, and are also given a tour of the facilities.
Applicants are evaluated based on: excellent standing within their residency program, educational qualifications, academic productivity (grants, publications, degrees, and experience), interview evaluation and letters of recommendations. We do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, age, religion, color, national origin, disability, or veteran status. We then send an offer letter to the selected individual.

Clinical Duties: The fellow is expected to rotate and participate in the clinical diagnosis, pre-operative assessment, intraoperative participation and postoperative management of patients with skull base lesions. The skull base procedures include management of complex tumors at the base of the skull extending from the anterior to the posterior cranial fossa. Also included in the skull base procedures is the vast experience with management of complex aneurysms located at the cranial base. The clinical material also consists of management of head and neck cancer patients along with the ENT Division within the Department of Surgery. None of the involvement of the fellow will interfere with neurosurgical resident training. The material in the Department of Neurosurgery exceeds the ability of senior resident involvement in all cases. The fellow will also be involved with teaching of residents at all levels.

Goals and Objectives: The Skull Base Neurosurgery Fellowship goal is to train experts in this subspecialty field. Upon completion of the training, the fellow will be able to use his/her detailed knowledge of skull base and vascular anatomy and physiology to diagnose and treat vascular lesions and tumors, and to know when such procedures are indicated.

Supervision: Program Faculty will have responsibility for teaching, supervision, and formal evaluation of the fellow’s performance in accordance with the program Standards of Performance. The Program Faculty includes:

- William T. Couldwell, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Chairman
- Richard H. Schmidt, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Neurosurgery
- Joel D. MacDonald, M.D., Associate Professor of Neurosurgery

Facilities:
University of Utah Hospital
Intermountain Medical Center

Clinical Oriented Research: The fellow is expected to be involved in the study of the various disease processes that involve the cranial base. In addition, the anatomical skull base laboratory provided by the Department of Neurosurgery is available for correlative anatomical studies and the developments and refinements in skull base approaches.
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The objective of training is to give fellows an organized, comprehensive, supervised, full-time educational experience in open skull base surgery. This experience includes the management of patients with all types of vascular conditions, the performance of simple and complex open surgical procedures, and the integration of these techniques into the surgical therapy of patients with complex vascular and skull base neoplastic diseases.

Educational Commitment: The Skull Base Surgery offers a monthly multi-disciplined conference in conjunction with ENT. The cases are presented for discussion and management. The Neuroradiology Department participates in the evaluation of the films for the Skull Base Surgery.

Expected Accomplishments: The fellow is expected to present papers at national and international meetings, as well as prepare publications in the peer-reviewed journals, and chapters for textbooks.

Evaluations: The fellow is formally evaluated by the faculty every three months or at the end of each rotation. This is done on line at https://www.e-value.net/ using evaluation forms based on the six competencies as outlined by the ACGME/Neurosurgery RRC. An assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for improvement is developed. These evaluation forms are reviewed by the Fellowship Director and Chairman. The Fellowship Director then meets with the fellow individually to review and sign the evaluation. The fellow receives a copy of the evaluation and may discuss it further at any time.