

## **Career Panel Q&A**

### **Social Work**

- *"Is social work a job you can do while completing school?"*

Many Master of Social Work programs have a part time option which allows for a student to work and take classes at the same time. While Clinical Social Work jobs at the hospital require the full degree and license in order to be hired, I know of many people who held other social work positions which required a bachelors to get experience as they were going to school.

- *"Is it easy to be a manger of social workers?"*

I served as a team lead for years supervising a team of social workers while I also had my own full-time position of caring for patients. I enjoyed the opportunity to train and supervise and work alongside others as we did the work. There are management positions in which the primary role is to support the Social workers doing the patient care. I personally enjoy working with the patients so would not want to only manage workers, however, my manger and others I have worked with really enjoy the work they do.

- *"Do you need to take classes to renew your license or continue your practice?"*

A clinical license needs to be renewed every 2 years. It requires 40 hours of continuing education. However, there are many free opportunities for continuing education and most jobs offer continuing education that is related to the work that you can attend during the work day. Most social workers enjoy these opportunities to learn new things and enhance the skills they already have.

### **Neurosurgery**

- *"If you could go back in time, do you have any advice for those who intend to go to medical school and become a surgeon?"*

I think my best piece of advice is to make sure that, whatever route you choose, that it is truly your passion. There is a big difference between having a passion and having a job. If it is something you are passionate about, you will naturally succeed at it. But in general, if you want to go to medical school of course you will need to work hard, and I would prioritize work before play (although still make time play!). If you want to become a surgeon, it will be important for you to spend a lot of time around surgeons to make sure that both the work and the lifestyle is suitable for you.

- *"Why did you choose neurosurgery?"*

I chose neurosurgery because I was fascinated by how patients with lesions in their nervous system present symptomatically, and I really enjoyed the fact that, as surgeons, we can help those patients by doing the right surgery.

- *"What made you want to go the academic route instead of going for a private practice?"*

I like that in academics, you generally get to help the sickest patients on top of being able to train residents/fellows, educate students, conduct research, and be more involved in societal neurosurgery.

- *"What helped you stay on the course and not lose motivation throughout the educational journey?"*

The 16-year journey after high school to become a neurosurgeon can definitely be hard. The things that helped me stay the course was great support from my family and friends, maintaining hobbies to be able to decompress, and really just being lucky that I discovered my passions and never had to change course.

- *"How could you combine medicine and research, specifically with neurosurgery?"*

Very easily! Most academic neurosurgeons take care of many patients and conduct research. Research can either be basic science where you are in a lab studying mechanisms behind diseases and/or how to treat them, or clinical where you collect data on patients and analyze that data to determine the best ways to surgically care for those patients.

- *"How long is neurosurgery residency?"*

7 years.

- *"What is the typical day like for a neurosurgery resident?"*

In general, a neurosurgery resident shows up early and rounds on all of the service patients in the hospital prior to the ORs starting that day. I would estimate that most residents come into the hospital around 5 or 5:30 AM. The workday typically consists of surgeries, which can vary in length. After surgery, residents typically round again to ensure that the plan for the day was enacted on all patients. Then, the residents can go home when the work is done, I would say maybe 8 PM on average. If the resident is on-call then they will typically stay overnight and field any calls from the emergency room and from the inpatient wards.

- *"How did you decide on neurosurgery instead of neurology and spine surgery over brain surgery?"*

I chose neurosurgery because I enjoy working with my hands to help patients with neurologic deficits. I chose spine surgery because I enjoy the decision making involved in caring for those patients, and I find those surgeries technically more enjoyable as well.

## **Neuroscience Research**

- *"I'm very good at writing and managing a team, very detail oriented and friendly. What entry level job related to neuroscience can I do while I'm in grad school?"*

I think the answer to this depends a lot on what graduate program you're in and what your goals are. For students in basic science master's degree programs, doing research in a lab is the job that will best complement your learning. For this, writing, detail orientation, and an ability to get along with others are all excellent and necessary skills. At this stage, you may not be managing a team, but it's an important skill to keep developing for later.

For other types of professional training programs in neuroscience-related disciplines, I'm not the best one to ask, but I suggest talking to the director of graduate studies (DGS) for your program, who is likely to know more.

- *"How much overlap have you seen with computational neuroscience and wet lab neuroscience?"*

There can be quite a lot! In some ways, it's better to think of computational approaches as yet another type of skill you can acquire or experiment you can run. Some of the most sophisticated computational neuroscientists in the field also run wet labs. I did a long postdoc as a wet lab researcher. For computational researchers, it's really vital to understand how experiments are designed and data are collected and analyzed, and in my lab, we work very closely with experimental collaborators as part of those processes. For wet lab neuroscientists, computational ways of thinking are an important complement to your bench skills, not only because you will be analyzing your own data, but because theory gives us a way of stepping back from experiments to try to put together the bigger picture.

- *"Would you recommend getting used to using platforms (e.g. R studio) before entering graduate school?"*

Absolutely! It is never too early to start programming. It's a skill that almost every student in research is now expected to acquire, and there are tons of (free!) resources out there to help you get started. On my lab's website, we maintain a [page](#) listing some resources we like.

- *"What are you researching in your lab specifically?"*

Thanks for asking! Like most faculty, my lab has a webpage ([pearsonlab.github.io](http://pearsonlab.github.io)) where we give a description of our [current research interests](#) and projects.

## **Pharmacy**

- *"Have you seen people with neuroscience PhDs in pharmaceutical positions?"*

MSLs have advanced scientific training and academic credentials that typically include a doctorate or comparable terminal degree (e.g., PhD, PharmD, MD) in the life sciences.