

CSNS Report: Communication & Education Committee – Bringing Socioeconomic Concerns to the Forefront through Education

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The CSNS functions throughout the year via working committees that address the socioeconomic concerns pertinent to neurosurgery. In that regard, the CSNS is charged with providing educational materials through CME offerings at national meetings and throughout the year, as well as publications. In order to carry out this duty, the Communication & Education Committee (CEC) meets regularly, lead by the dedicated chair Dr. Michael Steinmetz.

The CEC is responsible for the development and delivery of socioeconomic educational programs at the national CNS and AANS meetings, including breakfast and luncheon seminars, practical courses, and specially focused skills courses. The planning process for the CEC includes topic selection, based on the reported needs of neurosurgeons, and identifying appropriate faculty members to address socioeconomic learning objectives. Abstracts related to pertinent socioeconomic neurosurgical issues are reviewed and selected by members of the CEC for presentation at the annual meetings of the CNS and AANS. Concomitantly, the CSNS runs a socioeconomic session at national meetings on selected socioeconomic abstracts, allowing for both education and feedback through the interaction between the audience and educator, promoting well thought out publications.

Additionally, the CEC is charged with developing skill-based learning activities that are offered to neurosurgeons and staff members including negotiations, time and risk management, medico-legal development. These practical courses have generated great interest and have promulgated widely popular courses such as coding and reimbursement challenges in neurosurgery, practice management workshops, and the neurosurgeon as CEO. The number of offerings has increased over the last decade (for example, 19 socioeconomic courses at the AANS spring session) attesting to the mounting interest in relevant socioeconomic topics. Moreover, these courses address core competencies related to professionalism and systems-based practice which generates material for SANS and Maintenance of Certification examinations.

The CEC is looking for interested members that attend the CSNS meeting who are willing to promote education through socioeconomic avenues and are able to provide time, and talent in reviewing and selecting abstract submissions for future educational sessions as well as promoting the creation of publications and informative website offerings.

Below, Dr. Steinmetz participates in an in-depth discussion with the CSNS Editorial/Publication Committee.

What is the Communications/Education Committee? What is its purpose?

The CEC is the communications and education arm of the CSNS. The main function of the committee is to develop and coordinate socioeconomic educational material to be delivered electronically via the website, at the annual CNS and AANS meetings and special courses. Moreover, publications are produced for professional publications and the media.

How does the CEC function as part of the CSNS? Does it have subcommittees?

The CEC is a standing committee of the CSNS with multiple subcommittees. These subcommittees include website, mentoring, fellowship, and publications.

How often does your committee meet? Do you correspond throughout the year? Is this done primarily by e-mail or conference calls?

The CEC meets four times years. Throughout the year, the committee continues communication, either through email or conference calls as needed.

What does your committee have to do with determining continuing educational programs on socioeconomic topics? Do you use feedback from participant evaluations in determining content?

The CEC is responsible for developing and delivering socioeconomic educational offerings. These include practical courses, breakfast and luncheon seminars, and special courses. There is a CSNS session at both the AANS and CNS meetings. During these sessions, abstracts are presented on socioeconomic topics. The CEC develops topics and presentations for these sessions as well. The committee utilizes feedback from members to develop these offerings as well as a socioeconomic core curriculum located on the CSNS website, www.csnsonline.org.

Does your committee review socioeconomic abstracts that are submitted to the AANS and CNS meetings? What is the process utilized in doing so?

The CEC is charged with the review of socioeconomic abstracts presented at the annual meetings. The chair of the CEC organizes a review committee, consisting of at least 3 members of the CEC as well as the Chair.

What types of socioeconomic issues tend to be most popular among neurosurgeons? How involved is your committee in determining practical courses at national meetings and/or web-based educational products?

The most popular socioeconomic issues tend to vary year to year, largely depending on any issues at hand. Common and popular topics include CPT coding and reimbursement, practice efficiency, contract negotiation, and medical liability.

How does your committee encourage and/or promote the study of socioeconomic topics pertinent to the neurosurgeon?

The CEC is actively involved in socioeconomic education. Our mission is to present topics that are relevant and timely to the practicing neurosurgeon. We also maintain a curriculum of core socioeconomic topics and present these on an ongoing basis.

Certain socioeconomic courses seem to provide skill-based learning activities, for example, effective negotiations, time management, and risk management. Do you get feedback on how effective these courses are in developing socioeconomic skill sets for neurosurgeons?

This is something organized neurosurgery has not tracked well. The current evaluation process of course material is fairly superficial and rarely done in a true and effective manner. These evaluations would have to evolve and would have to be done at some predetermined time point following the course to evaluate its effectiveness. The CSNS through the Young Physicians Committee with some help from the CEC have taken the first step in this process by surveying these and other skills and knowledge from those who have recently taken their board exam.

Please tell readers what forums are available to neurosurgeons who are interested in learning more about socioeconomic issues, ie. journals, educational sessions, web-based products, books, SANS or MOC?

There are many socioeconomic offerings. First and foremost are the educational courses offered at the annual meetings. For example, at the AANS 2008 meeting there were 19 courses/sessions offered. The CNS Quarterly and AANS Neurosurgeon both publish article on socioeconomic articles, moreover, the publications subcommittee,

both encourage and writes articles for these publications. SANS offers web based, CME courses on socioeconomic topics as well.

How does the CEC reconcile the concerns raised by the Senate Finance Committee on the influence of industry on physician education? Will this impact socioeconomic educational activities?

Up to now, the CEC has not relied on industry to support our educational offerings. In a large part our annual meetings rely on industry support to finance their efforts. It is critical that all of these courses/sessions be free of commercial influence and bias. The CEC has no direct or support from industry. All of its members follow a strict conflict of interest disclosure.