

***The Committees of the Council of State Neurological Societies—
Highlighting the Young Physicians Committee***

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CSNS membership among younger neurosurgeons has significantly increased over the last 10 years, partly enhanced by the CSNS-sponsored programs designed to promote resident physician involvement, but also the CSNS' demonstrated commitment to address issues concerning all members of the neurosurgical workforce.

Reacting to a growing number of younger members, it became apparent that a Young Physicians Committee (YPC) would best give the CSNS a persuasive new voice in professional development and a new direction in various socioeconomic topics. The YPC meets regularly twice a year during the CSNS meetings, authoring and reviewing resolutions.

Equally important, the YPC is seen as a springboard for residents and neurosurgeons recently joining practice and/or academic positions to establish themselves as the future leaders of organized neurosurgery. Past members and chairs of this committee have contributed to a body of thought-provoking ideas and projects that concern socioeconomic issues, fostering a milieu for academic achievement and practice management satisfaction. Program directors recognize the positive impact of well-versed neurosurgical trainees and graduates and are supportive of resident involvement as the foundation for a future, well-informed neurosurgical workforce.

Catherine Mazzola, MD, is the energetic chairperson of the Young Physicians Committee. Through her enthusiastic encouragement, there has been an influx of new committee members fortifying and developing work previously started by other chairpersons such as Drs. Satish Krishnamurthy, Joshua Rosenow, and Edie Zusman. Recent undertakings such as the Brain Death Guidelines Project and Neurosurgery Residency Evaluations are some of the important and stimulating projects that the YPC is currently orchestrating. Dr. Mazzola encourages further participation as a means of advocacy for young neurosurgeons, not only for themselves but also for their contemporaries. Rapid communication via e-mail and e-blasts in between the traditional biannual meetings allows members to freely exchange ideas to further developing projects.

Below, Dr. Mazzola participates in an in-depth discussion of past, ongoing and exciting future projects for the committee in an interview with the CSNS Editorial/Publication Committee.

Could you give the readers a history of when the Young Physicians Committee was started and why it was formed? Is it intended to assist young neurosurgeons? Do you have a mission statement?

The Young Physicians Committee (YPC) was developed several years ago as a standing committee of the Council of State Neurosurgical Societies (CSNS). The purpose or mission of the YPC is to educate, interest, and involve young and resident neurosurgeons in current CSNS and AANS/CNS organizational activities related to socioeconomic issues of neurosurgery practice. We undertake research and report on educational projects or issues of particular interest to young neurosurgeons, including job search, practice initiation, Board certification and recertification, training conditions, practice economics, and other related topics.

What is the purpose of the Young Physicians Committee and how does it fit into the organization as a whole?

YPC meets regularly at the CSNS meetings, which occur just before the annual AANS and CNS meetings. Resolutions that have been submitted by UPC for discussion and presentation at the CSNS caucus meeting are discussed. Other resolutions submitted by state neurosurgery societies, independent neurosurgeons, or other committees may also be assigned to YPC for discussion and debate. Since our primary interest focuses on the career development of the young neurosurgeon, residency issues, board certification issues, and practice development are key topics of interest to YPC.

What projects have you worked on in the past? Do you find that younger neurosurgeons are more apt to be interested in the socioeconomic aspects of neurosurgery?

YPC has contributed to the development of "Gray Matter" on the CNS website, and other educational programs. Drs. Satish Krishnamurthy, Joshua Rosenow, Edie Zusman, yourself [Dr. Mick Perez-Cruet] and other past chairs of YPC have been instrumental in the development and support of many resident educational programs, including the Medtronic sponsored resident fellowships of the CSNS. Additionally, over the past year, YPC submitted a resolution proposing a post-residency graduate survey. We created a model of an online survey that could be mailed to residency graduates after board certification. We would like to obtain data about the adequacy of neurosurgical residency training. Our resolution was accepted and the model survey has been submitted to the Executive Committee of the CSNS. The model has also been presented at the Educational Summit in Washington, D.C.

What projects are you currently working on and who decides what projects that you and your committee should tackle?

The YPC is currently working on the Neurosurgery Residency evaluations. Once we receive recommendations from the Educational Summit Committee and the Education Committee of the CSNS, we will incorporate the suggested modifications into the current model. We would like to email the survey in May or June of 2008.

Our project ideas come from our members, the resolutions written by the YPC members, suggestions from the Education Committee, and sometimes by request from other committees. Together as a group, we discuss the proposed projects and define taskforce teams. Within the team, guidelines are set and project assignments are created.

Please tell us, in some detail, of the brain death project that you have recently completed. Has your committee provided for any continuing medical education in regards to this project or any others?

The brain death protocol was submitted as a resolution at the spring 2007 CSNS meeting. The resolution was written by me, with support from my partners in New Jersey, as well as the N.J. Sharing Network, an organ procurement organization. The resolution proposed that brain death pronouncement guidelines for neurosurgeons should be created by an appointed taskforce. With recent advances in neuroimaging, the reliability of CT and MR angiogram should be investigated in relationship to the assessment of cerebral blood flow. Some states allow CT or MR angiogram as a "confirmatory" test. There is also significant confusion regarding the presence of barbiturates in the blood, and the impact this has on cerebral blood flow and the pronouncement of brain death. While the goal of this project is to provide education and information for neurosurgeons regarding the pronouncement of brain death, there are no specific CME credits associated with the project at this time.

This interview is an opportunity for you to promote your committee's work; what would you like to say to the readers to encourage them to consider working on and with this committee?

The Young Physicians Committee is a very active standing committee of the CSNS. There are many young neurosurgeons who join YPC as their first committee within CSNS. The YPC provides the means and opportunity for young neurosurgeons to become advocates for themselves and their contemporaries. YPC gives a voice to the young neurosurgery graduate. YPC is striving to create an environment of change that would be welcomed and supported by the Senior Neurosurgical Society, as well as our other parent organizations. We receive guidance from the Education Committee, and do the work needed to take our projects and ideas to completion.

Besides publications, it appears the CSNS has ample opportunity to allow for the presentation of papers at the CNS and AANS meetings. How does your committee promote such activities?

Our committee allows an open forum for young residents and graduate neurosurgeons to express their concerns and ideas. These issues are discussed and debated by the group at our meetings and online. Occasionally, we submit resolutions and generate projects that address our concerns.

Have you or your committee generated any questions that could be utilized by the SANS course sponsored by the CNS? Do you have any plans for future questions?

YPC members have contributed in the past to SANS questions. The CSNS has been very active in the creation and compilation of questions, especially in the area of socioeconomic and medicolegal aspects of neurosurgery.

Please tell the readers when your committee meets next and how to get a hold of you ahead of time to answer any questions.

The YPC communicates among members via email and eblasts in between meetings. We meet regularly at the CSNS meetings which occur the 2 days prior to the CNS and AANS annual meetings. Anyone may join the YPC through the CSNS. Young neurosurgeons may contact me by email at camazzola@atlanticneurosurgical.com or ruebenacker@hotmail.com. Their ideas, suggestions and concerns are welcome. Additionally, young neurosurgeons may contact their state representatives, CNS or AANS representatives, in order to convey their comments. The CSNS website, www.csnsonline.org, is another excellent way to get more information about YPC.