

## Introduction to Spine Specialists

**Capital Neurological Surgeons** welcomes you to our practice. As a patient you have the right to choose the services and procedures that fit you the best. Please take a few minutes to review this handout, which can provide you with background information on the different services offered by different doctors and specialists and the role they may play in your care.

**Neurosurgery:** This is a surgical specialty in which the doctor performs surgery of the spine. **Neurosurgeons** train for 7 years after Medical School to learn the complex art of **surgery of the spine and brain**. Common conditions that are treated with neurosurgery include slipped disc of the neck or the back. Treatment involves using surgeries such as **laminectomy or discectomy** to cut out the **vertebral disc** or **bone spur** that can squeeze the spinal cord or pinch a nerve. Neurosurgeons treat patients with surgeries rather than medications or other forms of therapy. Due to the risks, surgery is an option to be considered later rather than as the first line of treatment. Patients with neck or back pain frequently see **Pain Management** doctors for more conservative treatment before seeking out a surgeon. **Capital Neurological Surgeons** provide the service of neurosurgery to our patients.

**Pain Management (Anesthesiology):** This is a fellowship trained subspecialty of Anesthesiology. Pain Management doctors train for 4 years after Medical School as an Anesthesiologist and then take a 2 year Pain Management fellowship to become a Pain Management doctor. There are several types of Pain Management doctors. The more common type of Pain Management doctors operate a Pain Clinic and their expertise is prescribing and managing the use of very powerful and sometimes dangerous pain medications such as **narcotics**. Another type of Pain Management doctor performs procedures such as **epidural steroid/cortisone shots, nerve blocks, facet blocks** etc. Some Pain Management doctors also implant **spinal cord stimulators** or **pain pumps**.

**Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR):** Rehabilitation doctors train for four years in PMR and can take additional training in 1-2 year fellowships to become a Physiatrist. Most PMR doctors prescribe **therapy** and are usually the first line in the treatment of patients with neck or back pain. PMR can improve pain without medicine through the use of **physical therapy, aquatherapy, TENS units (electrical stimulation of nerves), massage** etc. They can also help patients with the healing of the muscles and ligaments of the spine after surgery. Some PMR doctors can perform procedures such as **trigger point injections** to directly treat pain.

**Neurology:** Doctors train for 4 years in Neurology and treat patients with Neurological diseases. The **Neurologist** treats diseases with medications. Frequently patients with neck and back pain can have nerve damage such as **neuropathy** and the Neurologist can treat the pain and discomfort of neuropathy with very powerful and dangerous medications which require close monitoring. Neurologist also treats headaches with specialized medications or events shots such as **occipital nerve blocks**. Neurologist also treats other neurological conditions such as **myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis, seizures, Parkinsons, headaches**, etc.

