Fellowship FAQs

Subspecialty field: Epilepsy

What accreditation is available for fellowships (ACGME, UCNS, other) in this subspecialty field? Accreditation is currently available through an ACGME fellowship in clinical neurophysiology. A fellowship in epilepsy has been approved by ABPN. Approval from ACGME is expected soon, but individual programs will have to apply for credentialing purposes and development of the exam may take up to two years.

In Canada the only accreditation is the Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiology (CSCN) EEG certification examination.

Is board certification available in this subspecialty? If so, through which agency (ABPN, UCNS, other)? There is an added qualification in clinical neurophysiology through the ABPN, but this is merely an allied field and not a true board certification in epilepsy. The American Board of Clinical Neurophysiology, independent of ACGME, offers an 'Epilepsy Monitoring' exam, but not certification in the general specialty of epilepsy.

The ABPN offers an Added Qualification in Clinical Neurophysiology, and there will be an Added Qualification in Epilepsy in about two years. Graduates of Canadian Neurology training programs are eligible for these exams.

Does completion of this fellowship typically expand the scope of the subspecialist’s hospital credentials (added credentials for performing procedures, interpreting studies, etc)? Not all hospital credentialing boards require subspecialty training to allow individuals to interpret EEGs; however, most academic centers require subspecialty training in order to approve credentialing of an individual in the interpretation of Video/EEG.

The recognition of CSCN EEG certification in order to practice in EEG interpretation is quite variable in the different provinces but in Alberta, CSCN EEG certification is mandatory in order to be eligible to bill for EEG interpretation. The same applies to Evoked Potentials and EMG.

Is completion of a fellowship typically necessary in order to achieve a subspecialty-focused practice in an academic practice or a large neurology group practice? The majority of academic practices require fellowship training for an individual to conduct subspecialty focused practice and be considered for an academic appointment. There is greater variability in private group practices.

The Royal College in Canada is the only certifying board for all fellowship examinations. Candidates must have FRCPC (Fellow of Royal College of Physicians Certification) in Neurology in order to take the CSCN EEG examination.

What type of cases do you see? A wide range of people with epilepsy, including new-onset, medically refractory epilepsy, psychogenic nonepileptic seizures, epilepsy in special populations (the elderly, women, patients with co-morbidities). Presurgical evaluation is an important part of many fellowships. Pediatric epilepsy fellowships often are separate, but some programs overlap.

What is the typical minimum duration of a fellowship in this field? Can it be completed on a part-time basis? A part-time fellowship would be difficult to arrange. The generally accepted duration is 2 years for adult epilepsy fellows and 1 year for pediatric epilepsy fellows, although it
is preferred if pediatric epilepsy fellows consider 2-year fellowships for additional experience in intracranial long term recordings and electrocorticography. A two-year fellowship is important when considering an academic career.

The fellowship is structured for a one-year period; however, it is recommended that those physicians interested in academic medicine to pursue a second year of expanded experience in these areas, and more in depth research on a project developed during the first year. The second year allows for an emphasis on developing long term research projects, and application for funding. This is a specialized program designed to build upon an existing basic education in EEG. It is a full time position

**How are fellowship positions obtained- match or hospital based? How far in advance should inquiries be sent to the program to ensure a candidate’s consideration? Are there prerequisites beyond completion of a Neurology residency?**

The positions are hospital based. There is no formal match. Applicants should begin inquiring 18 months prior to the projected start date. There are no prerequisites aside from completion of a Neurology residency in good standing. Almost all fellowships require state licensure.

Applicants for EEG/Epilepsy Fellowship training should have specialty certification in neurology specialty for acceptance to the program. The Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiology offers certification in EEG upon satisfactory completion of training in a recognized program.

Most epilepsy programs do not have committed funded positions. Positions may also be available if the sponsoring institution provides financial support or if the trainee is self-supported.

**What are the principal clinical exposures and clinical responsibilities that would be common to fellowships in this discipline?** Video/EEG monitoring, ICU monitoring, Electroencephalography, Long term intracranial monitoring, Ambulatory epilepsy practice, including antiepileptic drug management. The degree of direct patient care responsibility varies among programs. Most academic programs have the opportunity to participate in ongoing clinical trials related to epilepsy.

Clinical fellows will evaluate and care for epilepsy patients in both in-patient and outpatient settings. The seizure monitoring unit and our active epilepsy surgical program provide a means for fellows to learn how to evaluate and refer patients for epilepsy surgery and device implantation. The Fellow will participate and rotate through all clinical aspects of the Epilepsy Program. Fellows will gain experience in interpretation of outpatient and inpatient EEG as well as long-term EEG monitoring of intensive care unit patients and intracranial and intraoperative EEG monitoring. The Fellows will participate in Wada testing, performing in-house epilepsy consults, conference presentation and interpretation of data, along with developing an understanding of the basic tenets of neurophysiology.

**Does faculty from outside Neurology typically participate in training? From which other specialties?** Sleep specialists (pulmonary medicine); neuroradiologists, neuropsychology, psychiatry, neurosurgery, and pathology

**Please provide a brief overview of the rotations a typical fellowship involves. Are there rotations required by accrediting bodies?** Video/EEG monitoring, ICU monitoring, Electroencephalography, Long term intracranial monitoring, Ambulatory epilepsy practice, Pediatric Epilepsy
The rotations are in EEG reading, epilepsy clinics and seizure monitoring unit. There is no accrediting body but the CSCN requires EEG Laboratory Director to approve that the fellow is eligible to take EEG examination.

**In your opinion, what are important qualities to look for in selecting a fellowship program in this field?** Adequate case variety and volume. Adequate supervision. Appropriate balance between service and education. Quality of faculty. Career trajectories of past graduates.


Active faculty research in EEG and Epilepsy is essential.

**What are the most important words of advice you have for a neurology resident considering a fellowship in the subspecialty field?** Discuss with the epileptologists in your department about your interest in the subspecialty field and ask for their recommendations as to where they would consider fellowship training.

Epilepsy is a multidisciplinary field and includes interaction of epileptologists, epilepsy surgeons, neuropsychologists and neuroradiologists and allied disciplines like nursing and psychologists in comprehensive patient care. A potential trainee should assess the availability of a well-integrated multidisciplinary team.

**Is there a professional society specific to this subspecialty?** Website: American epilepsy society (www.aesnet.org) or American Clinical Neurophysiology society (www.acns.org)

Recommended web based resources for further information and searching for fellowship positions:
www.aesnet.org