



2017

Year-End Summary and Update

Mission

The mission of the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS) is to provide for accreditation and certification with the goal of enhancing the quality of training for physicians in neurological subspecialties and the quality of patient care



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Introduction

The United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS) is pleased to present a year-end summary of the 2017 activities and accomplishments of the organization. With the strong leadership of the Board of Directors, the exceptional oversight of the **Accreditation** and **Certification** Councils, and the hard work of the UCNS staff, the organization is proud of its accomplishments during the past year and looks forward to an exciting 2018.

Financial Update

Unaudited financial statements for the twelve months ending December 31, 2017, indicate a net profit in excess of the budgeted \$6,653 profit for the year. This was largely due to better-than-anticipated interest and dividends, higher participant registration for examinations, and expenses that came in under budget. The year ended with assets totaling \$1,827,117, which is an increase of \$144,671 from the previous year.

Organizational Initiatives & Activities

Florida Board of Medicine Recognizes UCNS Certification

In April, UCNS Executive Director, Brenda Riggott, presented to the Florida Board of Medicine Rules & Legislative Committee, requesting that the UCNS be a recognized certifying agency in the State of Florida. The committee voted unanimously to recommend recognition and the full Board of Medicine gave final approval at its July meeting. As a recognized agency, UCNS diplomates will be allowed to advertise and promote their certification in the State of Florida.

Neurocritical Care Society Submits Request to ABPN

The Neurocritical Care Society (NCS) submitted an application to the American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology (ABPN) to pursue American Board of Medical Subspecialty (ABMS) certification. The application has been reviewed by ABPN and has been sent to the ABMS for action at its summer 2018 meeting. The UCNS was cooperative in providing information needed

Scorecard Measures Organizational Outcomes

In early 2016, the UCNS was notified by Cathy Rydell, American Academy of Neurology (AAN) CEO, that effective in 2017, the UCNS staff would no longer be included on the AAN Incentive Plan. AAN encouraged the UCNS to establish its own scorecard for tracking goals and outcomes that are tied to a staff incentive plan. A UCNS Scorecard and Incentive Plan was developed and modeled after those of the AAN and American Brain Foundation. Proposed incentive goals were based on the numbers used to calculate the approved 2017 UCNS budget. All goals relating to accreditation, certification, and annual budget were met or exceeded in 2017.

Electronic Voting Policy Initiated

In 2013, the UCNS updated the bylaws and incorporated language that allows the Board to vote electronically, but no policy was outlined to define the process for electronic voting at that time. A new electronic voting policy was implemented that will facilitate an efficient means of acting on business occurring between regular board meetings.

UCNS/AAN/ABPN Meeting in Minneapolis

In an ongoing effort to foster strong working relationships between the UCNS, AAN, and ABPN, representatives of each organization come together annually for networking and updates regarding the organizations. The meeting took place in January 2017, at the UCNS/AAN headquarter office in Minneapolis, and the 2018 meeting will take place in the Chicago area near the ABPN.

Surveys Provide Stakeholder Feedback

The UCNS conducted surveys of stakeholder groups including the UCNS Board of Directors, diplomates, lapsed diplomates, and training programs. Survey results were summarized and presented to the full Board as part of a “data-dive” for the strategic planning session to provide stakeholder feedback for the Board in its data-driven decision making and to assist staff in the development of resources and initiatives to address needs identified by the stakeholders.

Strategic Planning Session Focuses on Recertification and Data

The UCNS Board of Directors took part in a Strategic Planning Session in conjunction with their October board meeting. The staff presented the results of a “data dive” of information relating to certification and accreditation trends to provide a foundation for data-driven Board decision-making. Recertification was the topic of strategic focus, and alternative models for maintaining certification were explored and discussed. This discussion is timely as several ABMS certifying bodies, including ABPN, are piloting alternative programs to replace the customary high-stakes examinations. The Certification Council will meet in Minneapolis on March 23, 2018, to evaluate additional alternative models for recertification and proposed changes will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

Increasing Certification and Accreditation Awareness Through Marketing

The UCNS initiated marketing initiatives in 2017 to increase awareness and recognition of its certification examinations, diplomates, and accredited training programs. A formal plan of action was implemented that included the addition of an electronic newsletter that is distributed monthly to over 4,000 recipients. Increased reach has been achieved through partnering opportunities with sponsoring and parent organizations through utilization of their communication channels to distribute UCNS news and updates. While at the AAN Annual Meeting in Boston, the UCNS had an exhibit to interact with the neurology community. Meetings were conducted with representatives of four prospective subspecialties and updates were presented at eight UCNS-recognized subspecialty section meetings.

Accreditation

Annual Reports Provide Valuable Data

2017 was the first year that **UCNS-accredited training programs** were required to submit annual reports. The reports provide valuable insight into the programs providing up-to-date information relating to the number of fellowship slots available in the programs, and the percentage of fellowship openings that are filled for each subspecialty. This latest information was summarized for the Board at its strategic planning sessions and will also be shared with each subspecialty. Subspecialties will be able to use the shared information to assist them in determining the growth of their subspecialties and to provide useful information to make educated decisions regarding the length of time needed for practice track eligibility for certification.

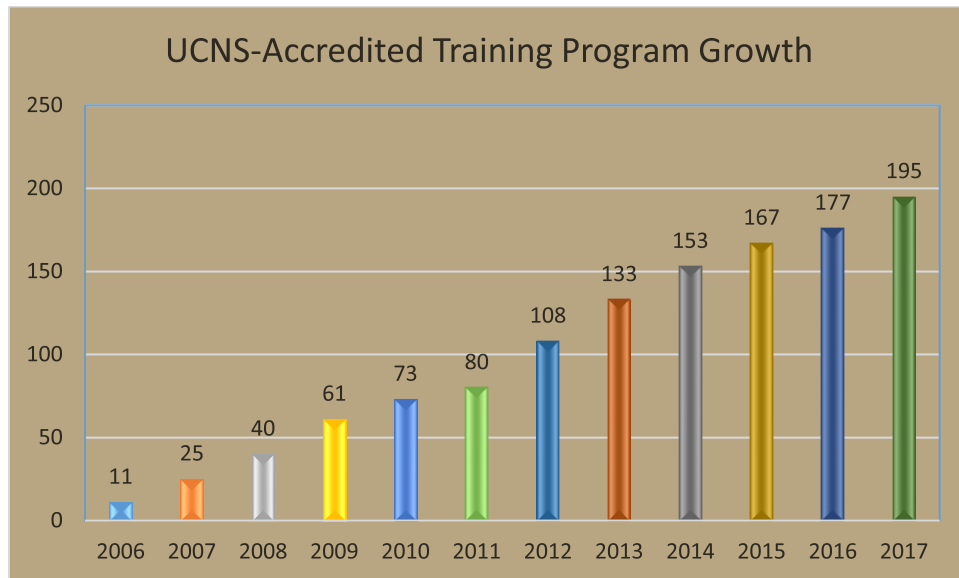
Training Program Milestones Development

Training program milestones are under development for UCNS-accredited programs. Modeled after the ACGME milestones, the UCNS common milestones were developed by the Accreditation Council. The Headache Medicine (HM) piloted development of the subspecialty-specific milestones. Committees appointed by Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry (BNNP), NCC, and Neuro-oncology (NO) have begun working to draft their subspecialty-specific milestones.

UCNS Accredited Program Growth

During 2017, UCNS added 20 new accredited training programs (Geriatric Neurology (GN) = 2; HM = 7; NCC = 7; NO = 4) and lost two Headache Medicine (HM) accredited programs for a net increase of 18 programs, bringing the total of **UCNS-accredited training programs** to 195. A total of 11 applications were received during the year, which was higher than the 10 applications forecasted in the 2017 budget. The 2017 Training Program Annual Reports revealed that there were 298 fellowship slots available in the first year of UCNS-accredited training programs, with 59% of those slots filled.

The 2018 UCNS action plans include a strategic approach to marketing UCNS-accredited programs and educating residents about UCNS-accredited training opportunities. This strategic approach will increase awareness about programs to assist with their continued success. The number of accredited programs is a measure of growth and sustainability for each subspecialty, and the new annual program reporting process provides a gauge of the actual output of fellows who are eligible for future certification.



Subspecialty Breakdown of Accredited Programs		
Subspecialty	2016 Training Programs	2017 Training Programs
Neurocritical Care	61	68
Headache Medicine	34	39
Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry	34	34
Neuro-oncology	27	31
Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology	6	6
Autonomic Disorders	5	5
Neuroimaging	5	5
Geriatric Neurology	3	5
Neural Repair and Rehabilitation	2	2
TOTALS	177	195

Certification

Certification Examinations

Certification and recertification applications came in ahead of budget with a net increase of 148 (5.5%) diplomates ending the year with 2,823. In 2017, recertification examinations were offered in NCC, NO, and Neuroimaging (NI), with an average participation rate of 71% of the diplomates due for recertification. This was much higher than anticipated. For comparison, in 2016 there was a recertification participation rate of 44% for the subspecialties of HM and BNNP. As the UCNS administers additional recertification examinations we will be able to determine more established trends for recertification in each subspecialty.

2017 Certification and Recertification Examination Summaries

Subspecialty	Initial Cert Apps Budgeted	Initial Cert Apps Received	Initial Cert Apps Final	Pass %	Recert Apps Budgeted	Recert Apps Received	Recert Apps Final	Pass %
2017 Exams								
Neuroimaging <i>Initial & Recertification</i>	63	33	30	87%	12	9	9	100%
Neuro-oncology <i>Initial & Recertification</i>	41	43	43	80%	12	20	20	100%
Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology	50	19	19	89%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Neurocritical Care <i>Initial & Recertification</i>	136	205	205	79%	103	110	105	95%
Totals	290	300	297	84%	127	139	134	98%

Diplomate Counts by Subspecialty

Subspecialty	2015 Yr End Diplomates	2016 Yr End Diplomates	2017 Yr End Diplomates
Neurocritical Care *	1,241	1,240	1,374
Headache Medicine	520	523	484
Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry	388	403	382
Neuro-oncology *	207	207	240
Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology *	35	43	59
Autonomic Disorders	27	38	37
Neuroimaging *	180	180	206
Geriatric Neurology	18	18	18
Neural Repair and Rehabilitation	23	23	23
TOTALS	2,639	2,675	2,823

* Exams given during 2017

Changes to Extension of Certification Policy

In initial years of certification, some subspecialty examinations were offered for two consecutive years and then moved to an every-other-year schedule. This now presents a challenge for the initial diplomates due for recertification in a year when no recertification examination is offered. Diplomates who fell in this recertification cycle were required to recertify a year early to avoid a lapse in certification. Listening to the feedback of UCNS diplomates, the Certification Council proposed a new policy that was approved by the Board of Directors allowing diplomates, who are due for recertification in a year when an examination is not offered, an extension of certification to the next examination to avoid a lapse of their certification.

Late Application Deadline Fees Implemented

The application period for each UCNS certification/recertification examination takes place over a 3.5 month period. Following the close of the application period, there are typically late requests to apply for the examination. It was noted that other certifying offer a tiered application period that includes an initial application deadline followed by a late application deadline and fee. It was proposed and approved that the UCNS initiate an initial application period of three months followed by a three-week late application period with a late application fee of \$500. This new policy provides a mechanism to have an extended deadline option for applicants and the applicable late fee provides potential additional revenue for the organization.

Policy for Physician Certification Reinstatement

As the number of UCNS certified physicians grows, there is an increased chance that there may be situations where physicians are no longer meeting the requirements to keep their primary certification status, which is a requirement of UCNS certification. A new policy for certification reinstatement was developed that provides a process to consider reinstatement upon successful completion of the requirements at which time diplomates will begin a necertification cycle. Reinstatement is subject to approval by the Certification Council and Board of Directors.

Eligibility Period Extended for Accredited Fellowship Pathway

Recognizing the challenges faced by many recent fellowship graduates as they get established in their careers, the Certification Council reviewed the policy that stated fellows must sit for a certification examination within 36 months after graduation from a UCNS-accredited fellowship program. The policy was revised to allow applicants to apply within 48 months of completing their fellowship and meeting the other application requirements.

Neurocritical Care Recertification Examination Granted for 2018

The Neurocritical Care Society (NCS) requested and was granted the addition of a recertification examination in 2018 to avoid a lapse in certification for NCC diplomates who are due for recertification in 2018 when examinations were not scheduled for subspecialty. This will also provide a timely recertification option for those who fail their recertification examination in 2017. Lapsing certification is a concern for this subspecialty as many institutions require UCNS-

certification for their NCC specialists. The NCS partnered in offsetting the financial risks of administering this additional recertification examination which will take place in December 2018.

Practice Track Extension Policy Amended

The practice track extension policy was amended to allow sponsoring organizations the option to apply for practice track extensions after the original track expiration. No more than nine examinations may be administered under the new practice track pathway for each subspecialty. In addition to providing a certification opportunity for physicians who have been practicing in the subspecialty field before training programs were available, the practice track eligibility period also provides time for the number of subspecialty training programs to grow to the point that the number of graduating fellows can sustain the certification process on its own. Following the policy change, extension requests were received, reviewed, and approved from Headache Medicine and Neuroimaging.

Conclusion

The UCNS experienced a strong year financially with healthy growth in the number of accredited programs and diplomates who achieved certification in UCNS-recognized subspecialties. With a rigorous program of work planned for the coming year, the UCNS Board of Directors, Councils, committees, and staff look forward to continued success and partnerships with our parent and sponsoring organizations.

As the UCNS embarks on evaluating alternative recertification models, it will also work to accomplish the goals set forth for 2018:

- Raise awareness of the UNCS in the neurologic community.
- Advocate for recognition of UCNS accreditation and certification in the medical community and at state/federal levels.
- Engage new subspecialties in seeking UCNS recognition for strategic growth of their subspecialty and development of quality standards for expertise and training.
- Increase the number the number of UCNS-accredited training programs.
- Increase the number of UCNS-certified diplomates.
- Meet or exceed the 2018 budget.

2017 UCNS Board of Directors

Parent Directors	Parent Organizations
Chair: Ralph F. Józefowicz, MD, FAAN University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry	American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
Vice Chair: David J. Fink, MD, FAAN University of Michigan	Association of University Professors of Neurology (AUPN)
Secretary/Treasurer: Robert J. Baumann, MD, FAAN University of Kentucky	Professors of Child Neurology (PCN)
Paul G. Fisher, MD, MHS Stanford University Medical Center	Child Neurology Society (CNS)
José Biller, MD, FAAN, FACP, FAHA Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine	American Neurological Association (ANA)
Subspecialty Voting Member Directors	Sponsoring Organization/Subspecialty
Yadollah Harati, MD Baylor College of Medicine	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> AAN Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Clinical Neuromuscular Pathology
Morris Levin, MD UCSF Headache Center	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> AAN Headache Medicine Section American Headache Society <i>Subspecialty:</i> Headache Medicine
Louis B. Nabors III, MD University of Alabama at Birmingham	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> AAN Neuro-oncology Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Neuro-oncology
Mindy L. Aisen, MD Solana Beach, CA 92075-1147	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> American Society of Neural Repair AAN Neural Repair & Rehabilitation Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Neural Repair & Rehabilitation

Subspecialty Non-Voting Representatives	Parent
Patrick M. Capone, MD, PhD Winchester Neurological Consultants, Inc.	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> American Society of Neuroimaging <i>Subspecialty:</i> Neuroimaging
Michael L. "Luke" James, MD, FAHA, FNCS Duke University Medical Center	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> Neurocritical Care Society AAN Neurocritical Care Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Neurocritical Care
Marwan N. Sabbagh, MD, FAAN Dignity Health	<i>Sponsoring Organization:</i> AAN Geriatric Neurology Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Geriatric Neurology
Mario F. Mendez (Ashla), MD, PhD, FAAN, FANPA VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System	<i>Sponsoring Organizations:</i> American Neuropsychiatric Association Society for Behavioral & Cognitive Neurology <i>Subspecialty:</i> Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry
Paola Sandroni, MD, PhD, FAAN Mayo Clinic - Rochester	<i>Sponsoring Organizations:</i> American Autonomic Society AAN Autonomic Nervous System Section <i>Subspecialty:</i> Autonomic Disorders
Ex Officio Non-voting Directors and Liaisons	Organization
Steven L. Lewis, MD, FAAN University Neurologists	American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology
Shannon Kilgore, MD VA Palo Alto Health Care System	American Council for Graduate Medical Education Neurology Residency Review Committee
JoAnne Taie Executive Director Association of University Professors of Neurology	AUPN
Nadine Goldberg, PhD, MS Executive Director American Neurological Association	ANA
Roger Larson, Executive Director Child Neurology Society/Professors of Child Neurology	CNS/PCN
Catherine M. Rydell, CAE Executive Director American Academy of Neurology	AAN
Staff: Brenda Riggott Executive Director United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties	UCNS
General Counsel: Bruce Levi, JD, CAE United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties	UCNS

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