

CONSULT-LIAISON PSYCHIATRY FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

General Subspecialty Overview Questions

What is this Subspecialty?

Consultation Liaison (CL) Psychiatry (previously known as Psychosomatic Medicine) is a subspecialty of psychiatry focused on assessing and treating behavioral/psychiatric symptoms in patients with medical and surgical problems. CL Psychiatrists work in both inpatient and outpatient medical, surgical and obstetrical settings and specialize in diagnosing and treating psychiatric disorders in medically ill patients, understanding how medical, neurological, and other conditions are affected by psychiatric problems, and appreciating how psychological factors affect physical conditions. CL Psychiatrists also examine how medical conditions and medications can cause psychiatric symptoms and are interested in sorting through the ways that psychiatric and medical problems relate to each other. CL psychiatrists use many different types of treatment modalities, including both pharmacologic and psychotherapeutic interventions.

What kinds of patients do psychiatrists in this subspecialty see?

CL psychiatrists see a great diversity of patients. Many of these patients have acute or chronic medical conditions, may be of pre- or post-operative status or may be pregnant/peripartum, which may require psychiatric consultation. CL psychiatrists can provide consultation for patients throughout the lifecycle.

In what settings do psychiatrists in this subspecialty work?

CL Psychiatrists work in both inpatient and outpatient settings and can often design a career based on which setting is of greatest interest. Inpatient work generally takes place on the medical, surgical, and obstetrical services of hospitals and involves consulting on acute psychiatric concerns. Hospitals can be small community hospitals, Veterans Administration hospitals, or large academic medical centers. Outpatient work takes place in a variety of general medical and subspecialty practices (including primary care, HIV, obstetrics and oncology) and may involve brief consultation or ongoing provision of psychiatric care. Some CL psychiatrists also work in nursing homes, psychiatry emergency rooms, homeless shelters, VA hospitals or military bases. CL psychiatrists also use new technologies such as telepsychiatry.

Can I get board (ABPN) certification in this subspecialty?

Yes, after completing a 1 year ACGME accredited fellowship and passing the ABPN subspecialty certification exam, you will be board certified in Consultation Liaison Psychiatry.

Why Do a Fellowship?

There are many reasons to pursue fellowship training in general and CL Psychiatry specifically. In general, fellowship training is a great opportunity to have a year to transition from being a trainee to being an attending. Fellows often have the opportunity to teach, mentor and supervise junior trainees, make important connections for a future career, receive their own mentorship, develop independent practice skills (improve organization, efficiency and confidence), increase knowledge base, embark upon scholarly projects, and learn how to administer a consult service. Fellowship trained psychiatrists typically have many job opportunities and many employers will pay higher salaries for those who have completed subspecialty fellowship training. It is also common for fellows to start an academic position at a higher academic level (assistant professor) as compared with those who have just completed residency training. From a personal satisfaction standpoint, developing subspecialty expertise affords one the opportunity to have a built-in network of peers/colleagues, become connected to a national subspecialty organization (ACLP for CL Psychiatry), and have a specialized base from which to develop further clinical expertise or a research career.

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CL Psychiatry in particular is an exciting and rapidly growing field that can provide a satisfying career for those with a desire to combine a love and talent for psychiatry with a clinical or academic interest in any number of medical, surgical or obstetrical fields. Those psychiatrists who value working collaboratively with multidisciplinary treatment teams will find the team-based approach to care and the opportunity to co-manage patients with non-psychiatrist healthcare providers rewarding. Those psychiatrists who favor a bio/psycho/social approach to clinical assessment and treatment planning will appreciate the holistic approach necessary for evaluating and treating medically complex patients. CL psychiatrists have the unique opportunity to employ a variety of treatment approaches, including medications, multiple modalities of psychotherapy, ECT, and DBS. CL Psychiatrists also become knowledgeable in many of the other psychiatric specialty areas, including geriatrics and addiction. Because of the consultative nature of the work, CL Psychiatry is a highly flexible and versatile subspecialty, allowing for the combination of clinical work with other career interests and most CL psychiatrists also have roles in education, research, or administration.

CL Psychiatry is also a wonderful field for those interested in healthcare reform, healthcare administration, population-based care, and health policy. CL Psychiatrists are uniquely poised to assist with major healthcare reform efforts, and specifically to help address the rising costs of healthcare. Data suggests that individuals who are high utilizers of healthcare services are usually complex patients with comorbid chronic medical and psychiatric illness. In fact, having multiple chronic medical conditions has been associated with higher rates of psychiatric illness in multiple studies. CL psychiatrists are specifically trained in treating patients with multiple comorbidities and are poised to lead many of the initiatives and strategies that are being utilized as a means of addressing the challenges posed by such patients. Such initiatives include collaborative care, proactive psychiatric consultation within medical settings, and delirium prevention programs. Extensive research has established that collaborative care for depression and chronic illness improves both mental and physical outcomes while saving health care costs. Additionally, proactive psychiatric consultation on a general medicine inpatient unit has been shown to reduce costs and improve outcomes.

What type of career might you pursue after CL Psychiatry fellowship?

CL Psychiatrists can pursue many types of careers. Clinical careers can include academic, public or private sector clinical work. This work can take place in the inpatient, outpatient or ED setting and can be consultative in nature or more integrated/embedded. Many CL psychiatrists pursue careers in undergraduate or graduate medical education, research, or hospital/departmental administration.

Specific Subspecialty Resources

What is the national organization for CL Psychiatry fellowship?

Academy of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry (ACLP), formerly known as Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine (APM)

<https://www.clpsychiatry.org/>

5272 River Road, Suite 500 • Bethesda, MD 20816

PH: (301) 718-6520

FX: (301) 656-0989

Should I join and how much does it generally cost?

You should absolutely join ACLP and come to the annual meeting. You should also get involved with one of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) or committees/subcommittees and can do so by reaching out to the respective chairs, whose contact information is available on the website. Annual dues are \$55 for postgraduate trainees and free for medical students, as of 2018.

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See the link below for more information about joining:

<https://www.clpsychiatry.org/about-aclp/join-aclp/>

When is the annual meeting typically, and are there trainee scholarships to attend?

The annual meeting takes place in November. Trainee Travel Awards are given to a limited number of CL Psychiatry fellows, residents, or medical students to help offset the cost of attending the Academy's annual meeting. The dollar amount and number of awards are determined by Council each year. The application deadline is usually in early July. ACLP also has the William Webb Fellowship Program, which was created to foster the career development and leadership potential of advanced residents and CLP fellows. The fellowship offers mentoring, networking, and sustained involvement in the organization. More information, on how to apply and past Webb fellows can be found on the ACLP website.

Where can I read more about this subspecialty area?

Journals: Psychosomatics; General Hospital Psychiatry; Journal of Psychosomatic Research

Textbooks: The American Psychiatric Association Publishing Textbook of Psychosomatic Medicine and Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry, Third Edition (2019)– Edited by James Levenson

ACLP website- has a special section for residents

Does the national organization for this subspecialty have a mentorship program?

ACLP's William Webb Fellowship Program offers mentorship for residents and fellows who receive the award. ACLP also has a specific mentorship program geared towards resident ACLP members with an interest in the field.

How can I get more involved in the national organization?

First, join ACLP! Second, look at the resident resource section on the website. Third, look on the ACLP website for committees and special interest groups and reach out to the chair if interested in joining. Fourth, go to the annual meeting and look for the trainee-oriented events and special interest group meetings.

Fellowship Application

How do I learn about all the CL Psychiatry fellowships nationally, and when should I start learning about them?

The ACLP website lists all of the CL psychiatry fellowships nationally, along with contact information for the fellowship director and/or coordinator and available website information. Look at the websites for the programs to get more information about the programs and reach out to the fellowship director and/or coordinator to obtain any additional information about the fellowship year and the application process. Some cities (such as NYC) do an annual fellowship fair at which fellowship directors are available to tell you more about their programs. FRIEDA online and the ACGME website can also be helpful sources of information. Other resources for fellowship information include the people at your own residency program, connections that you have made through your local APA chapter, or through ACLP participation as a resident. Be sure to avail yourself of any assistance that these individuals can provide as "inside information" may be very helpful as you start your investigation into fellowships. The middle to end of the PGY3 year is a good time to start learning about the different programs.

See the below link from the ACLP for information about the fellowship application process:

<https://www.clpsychiatry.org/wp-content/uploads/clp-fship-candidate-info.pdf>

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When does the application season typically begin?

Most people start applying in the summer between the PGY3 and PGY4 years and programs interview most applicants during the late summer/early fall period. You should contact individual programs to find out about specific application deadlines.

Is there a formal Match through NRMP?

As of Fall 2013, the fellowship selection process operates as a Match through the NRMP Specialties Service Match and will be similar to the process used for psychiatry residency programs. CL Psychiatry and Child Psychiatry participate in the same Match cycle (rank lists submitted in December and Match results in early January). You will need to register for the Match so make sure to check the NRMP website for the current calendar and register in advance of the rank-order list deadline. Programs cannot rank you unless you are registered. After interviewing at programs, you will submit your rank list to the NRMP.

How many programs should I apply to?

It is difficult to provide a specific recommendation regarding the number of programs to apply to as this will vary based on the strength of your individual application and your program or geographical area of interest. It may be helpful to know that the fill rate for CL psychiatry fellowship nationwide is around 50%, so there are plenty of spots to go around for interested applicants. Some programs and geographic areas are harder to match at than others (due to available spots and/or popularity), so you will likely need to apply to more than 1 program in those circumstances. Since the programs vary so greatly, it will be a useful experience to apply to and interview at a variety of programs, so that you can decide which type of program is the right fit for you. Your residency training director and your CL psychiatry attendings will be in the best position to offer you advice regarding how many programs to apply to.

How competitive is getting a fellowship spot?

See response above. There are more than enough available CL psychiatry fellowship spots in the country for all qualified applicants who are interested. Some programs or geographical areas are more competitive than others due to the number of available spots available or to popularity.

Is there a research/scholarly activity requirement or completed suggested rotations to get my desired fellowship spot?

There is not a specific research/scholarly activity requirement, although these types of activities can strengthen an application and make you more desirable to certain programs. The most important rotation for fellowship preparation is the CL psychiatry rotation required by your own residency program and fellowship directors will be interested to see a recommendation letter from one of your CL psychiatry attendings. Seeking out additional CL psychiatry electives within your own program (such as subspecialty electives, outpatient CL experiences, chief/junior attending experiences) can also demonstrate interest in the field to fellowship directors.

Are there any eligibility requirements or things I must complete before applying/starting?

You must be on track to complete (prior to starting fellowship) 4 years of an ACGME accredited psychiatry residency training program and be in good standing within your program. Some programs have specific requirements regarding USMLE or COMLEX performance or eligibility for state licensing and you should inquire about those requirements from each individual program.

What does the application typically entail, and how many interviews should I go to?

ACLP offers a Common Application form, available on the ACLP website and many (but not all) programs are willing to accept this application. Many other programs have their own application form that they require in addition to or instead of the Common Application, so be sure to check with individual programs regarding their requirements. Most applications involve a personal statement regarding interest in CL psychiatry, curriculum vitae (CV), demographic and educational history information and

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letters of recommendation (including from your residency training director). Some programs will also request a copy of your MSPE (from medical school), licensing documents, and USMLE or COMLEX score reports.

Is there a difference between ACGME accredited and non-accredited fellowships?

Completion of an ACGME-accredited fellowship is required in order to be eligible to take the ABPN Consultation Psychiatry board certification exam.

The Fellowship Year

How long is the fellowship?

Training in CL Psychiatry currently follows completion of a 4 year General Psychiatry residency training program and most fellowships are 1 year. Some programs offer an optional 2nd year for research.

What would I learn during the fellowship year?

You would learn how to provide inpatient and outpatient consultation, develop relationships with medical services, gain knowledge about the relationship between psychiatric symptoms and medical illness, learn how to administer a consult service and become introduced to demonstrating the value of a psychiatric consultant to health care settings.

In what settings would I work during fellowship?

You would work in inpatient and often outpatient or emergency room settings. Outpatient could involve a variety of medical specialties, such as HIV, Obstetrics, and Oncology.

Are there major differences between the fellowship programs, and if so, how do I choose the right program for me?

There are many differences between fellowship programs and you should find the program that is the right fit for you and your interests. Differences include size and type of clinical practice setting (academic medical center, VA facility, community hospital), didactic curriculum, balance between inpatient and outpatient work, faculty to trainee ratio, availability of research/scholarly opportunities and mentorship, exposure to subspecialty areas of CL psychiatry (such as transplant or reproductive psychiatry), and teaching opportunities.