

# BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

## General Subspecialty Overview Questions

### *What is Neuropsychiatry?*

Neuropsychiatry is generally considered to be the application of neurology and cognitive neuroscience skills in combination with psychiatric skills to the differential diagnosis and treatment of patients with problems involving the brain-behavior interface. Neuropsychiatry is more of an approach to the patient than a collection of particular disorders. Detailed historical inquiry informed by the neuropsychiatrist's knowledge of brain-behavior disorders and detailed neurocognitive examination, combined with the judicious use of neurodiagnostic and laboratory investigations, lead to the differential diagnosis, neuropsychiatric formulation, and treatment plan. Two great ways to explore the field of neuropsychiatry are to 1) begin reading the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* and 2) attend the annual meeting of the American Neuropsychiatric Association (<https://www.anpaonline.org>).

### *What kinds of patients do psychiatrists in this subspecialty see? In what settings do psychiatrists in this subspecialty work?*

Some neuropsychiatrists work as a psychiatric consultant to neurology services (inpatient, outpatient, or both). Some work in memory clinics and may focus on patients with neurodegenerative and neurocognitive disorders. Some work in rehabilitation hospital settings. Others work in traditional psychiatric settings (inpatient, outpatient, consultation-liaison) and apply a neuropsychiatric approach to diagnosis and treatment. Some neuropsychiatrists work in electroconvulsive therapy and/or neuromodulation services, though those treatment modalities are not considered core to the subspecialty. Common conditions seen by neuropsychiatrists include dementia, traumatic brain injury, seizure disorders, post-stroke syndromes, demyelinating disease, neurodevelopmental disabilities, psychiatric comorbidities of neurologic conditions, and neurologic comorbidities of psychiatric conditions.

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

The ABPN does not offer a certificate in neuropsychiatry. Certification in Behavioral Neurology and Neuropsychiatry is administered by the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS). More on their requirements can be found here:

[https://www.ucns.org/Online/Online/Certification/Behavioral\\_Cert.aspx](https://www.ucns.org/Online/Online/Certification/Behavioral_Cert.aspx)

The UCNS is the organization that accredits many smaller neurological subspecialties. Behavioral neurologists must complete the same core curriculum as neuropsychiatrists in BNNP fellowships. Many but not all UCNS-accredited BNNP fellowships will accept graduates of either neurology or psychiatry residency programs.

## Why Do a Fellowship?

BNNP training provides a comprehensive approach to patients with a wide range of neuropsychiatric and neurobehavioral disorders. Rather than a particular "type" of patient, one can consider BNNP a philosophical approach to the patient. To riff on the classic joke that, "neurologists find lesions they can't treat and psychiatrists treat lesions they can't find," the neuropsychiatrist is fundamentally interested in both the finding and the treating of the "lesion" whether that "lesion" (or disorder) is identifiable by current neurodiagnostic modalities or not. Apply for a neuropsychiatry fellowship if you want to do neurocognitive/neurobehavioral evaluations of complex brain-behavior interface problems under the supervision of an expert in the field.

### *What type of career might you pursue after BNNP fellowship?*

Many graduates of BNNP fellowships join academic psychiatry departments and take traditional inpatient, outpatient, or consultation positions, bringing with them added skill in neuropsychiatry that makes them desirable as clinicians, educators, and researchers. Non-academic settings include private

## **BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY**

and group practices, memory clinics, collaborative care settings with a neurology practice, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, consultation-liaison settings, or rehabilitation hospitals. Many neuropsychiatrists enjoy engaging in forensic work as an expert witness. Above all, neuropsychiatrists find that their expanded knowledge base in clinical neuroscience adds meaning to their work as physicians.

# BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

## Specific Subspecialty Resources

*What is the national organization for BNNP fellowship?*

American Neuropsychiatric Association (ANPA)

<https://anpaonline.org/>

*Should I join and how much does it generally cost?*

YES!

Trainee Member - \$75.00 per year

Trainee Members are individuals in any level of clinical training, including fellowships and residencies.

Trainee Members are eligible to participate in all aspects of the Association and receive a subscription to the Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences.

Student Member - \$25.00 per year

Student Members are individuals in medical school or in a doctoral program. Student Members are eligible to participate in all aspects of the Association except they are not eligible to vote and they do not receive a subscription to the Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences.

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

ANPA meetings are typically mid-March and there are two types of scholarship awards, the Young Investigator Award and the Clinical Neuroscience Trainee Award, both of which include free registration to the meeting and a \$750 stipend. More information can be found here: <https://anpaonline.org/Awards>

*Where can I read more about this subspecialty area?*

ANPA: <https://anpaonline.org/>

UCNS Program Requirements:

[https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program\\_Requirements.aspx](https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program_Requirements.aspx)

UCNS Certification Requirements:

[https://www.ucns.org/Online/Online/Certification/Behavioral\\_Cert.aspx](https://www.ucns.org/Online/Online/Certification/Behavioral_Cert.aspx)

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

Yes! ANPA's Early Career Committee organizes mentorship events for trainees and early career neuropsychiatrists at every annual meeting and has paired trainees with senior ANPA mentors.

*How can I get more involved in the national organization for my subspecialty?*

Contact the ANPA Administrative Office (Administrative Director: Katherine Veal -- [anpaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:anpaoffice@gmail.com)), or express interest in joining an ANPA Special Interest Group (<https://anpaonline.org/SIGs>), or an ANPA Committee (<https://anpaonline.org/Committees>).

## Fellowship Application Process

The American Neuropsychiatric Association (ANPA) Early Career Committee has compiled a guide to the fellowship available here (<https://anpaonline.org/Education-resources>), and the text is copied (with only minor edits) below:

*Becoming a Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry (BNNP) Fellow*

Your decision to pursue subspecialty training at the interface of neurology and psychiatry is a wise one. Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry (BNNP) is a discipline rich with tradition and full of therapeutic promise.

## BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

For those senior neurology and psychiatry residents who are considering a BNNP fellowship, the application process might seem daunting and opaque. The following is intended as a guide to help you obtain a fellowship that best suits your educational and professional goals.

### *Getting Started*

As the application process for BNNP fellowships is highly unstandardized, it is recommended that you begin exploring fellowship opportunities by the fall/winter of your third year of residency (PGY-3). A number of programs begin accepting applications and granting interviews as early as the spring of PGY-3 (with anticipated matriculation over a year later). It is also worth noting that programs are free to offer fellowship spots on a “rolling” basis. All of this is to emphasize that it is in your best interest to initiate the application process as early as possible.

One great way to begin your search is to attend the American Neuropsychiatric Association (ANPA) Annual Meeting—held every March—where opportunities to meet fellowship directors and thought leaders in the field abound. Over the course of the four-day meeting, the Early Career Committee holds a number of events and mixers. These are open to all attendees and are excellent opportunities to network and learn more about the training programs.

### *Choosing Programs*

For a complete, up-to-date list of “certified” BNNP fellowships, please see the [United Council for Neurologic Specialties \(UNCS\) directory](#).

Additionally, ANPA’s [“About Us”](#) page often lists programs that are actively recruiting fellows.

As its name suggests, BNNP is a multidisciplinary subspecialty only recently combined from two related but historically distinct fields. You are encouraged to explore these differences prior to and during your application process. In addition to enriching your network at ANPA, it may be helpful to seek out the wisdom of your own institution’s faculty mentors and program director(s) in order to make a better, more informed decision.

Lastly, there are the usual considerations that go into decisions of this sort, including geography, family and partner preference, and duration of training (1 vs. 2 years). For these, consider soliciting the thoughts of your support network—your partner, friends, and family.

### *The Application Process*

With rare exception, BNNP programs request three elements to the application: 1) a current CV, 2) a personal statement, and 3) three letters of support. Do not delay in getting your materials prepared. Composing your personal statement, in particular, may be a time-consuming process. Consider consulting your mentors, program directors, friends, and colleagues to review your draft before submission.

Regarding letters of recommendation, we recommend that you request these of your program director and/or faculty mentors who can speak to your competency and interest in cognition and neurobehavior. possible, it is recommended that psychiatry residents get at least one letter from a neurologist and vice versa.

Finally, it is customary to submit a cover letter with your application as well. You may submit your complete file, typically via email to program director and/or coordinator, as indicated on the fellowship program website.

## BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

Following submission, the wait begins. Typically, you will receive correspondence from either the program director or coordinator acknowledging receipt of your application.

### *The Interview*

After weeks-to-months of waiting, you may receive a most welcome invitation to interview at the program(s) of your choice. You are encouraged to respond to these invitations with timeliness. If you have already accepted a position elsewhere, take special care to politely decline interviews and withdraw your application from further consideration.

As you make travel arrangements, be sure to coordinate time off with your training office. Design your itinerary in a manner that optimizes comfort and efficiency. Unless advised otherwise, traditional business attire is the accepted code of dress.

The interview day itself perhaps represents the single best opportunity to tease out goodness of fit. Be certain to seize this opportunity—express your interests and have your questions answered. You can also expect to meet with current fellows as part of your interview day. Their perspectives and experiences can be valuable data to consider as you make your final decision.

Following your interview day, you may wish to send electronic “thank you” notes to faculty, fellows, and coordinators. If you have special interest in a particular program, you may elect to express this in a carefully composed email to the Program Director or even an “old fashioned” physical thank you note.

### *Accepting a Position*

If you have the good fortune of receiving several offers, again, reply promptly and courteously. If there are programs from which you have yet to hear, you may feel unprepared to immediately commit. We recommend that you do your utmost to communicate honestly with those programs that have offered you a position and, if need be, politely request additional time to consider your options. Consider reaching out to those programs from which you are awaiting a decision to provide an update on your change in status and inquire about your standing.

Simply put, your openness, courtesy, and timeliness with communication are critical to this process.

### *Is there a formal Match through NRMP?*

No.

### *To how many programs should I apply?*

There is no standard advice here, nor is systematic data collected on this point. Based on personal communications, many applicants apply to 4-10 programs.

### *How competitive is getting a fellowship spot?*

There are typically some unfilled programs each year, but some programs are highly competitive.

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

While not an official requirement, many programs, particularly those who offer a 2-year research-oriented track, weigh research/scholarly activity highly in the application process.

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

For psychiatry applicants it is generally recommended to have one of the required three letters of recommendation to come from a neurologist familiar with your clinical skills.

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

## BEHAVIORAL NEUROLOGY & NEUROPSYCHIATRY (BNNP) FELLOWSHIP: HOW AND WHY TO APPLY

BNNP Fellowships are non-ACGME accredited, but are accredited by the UCNS and must follow the UCNS requirements: [https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program\\_Requirements.aspx](https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program_Requirements.aspx)

### The Fellowship Year

#### *How long is the fellowship?*

BNNP fellowships are typically either 1 year (80% clinical) or 2 years (40% clinical) depending on the amount of time dedicated to research and scholarship.

#### *What would I learn during the fellowship year?*

BNNP training involves learning about the evaluation, differential diagnosis, prognosis, pharmacological treatment, psychosocial management, and neurorehabilitation of persons with complex neuropsychiatric and neurobehavioral conditions. Foundational to this is a deep understanding of functional behavioral neuroanatomy.

#### *In what settings would I work during fellowship?*

Fellowships vary markedly in the type of clinical settings. Memory clinics, rehabilitation hospitals, inpatient and outpatient neurologic and psychiatric services, consultation-liaison settings, and specialized services such as an epilepsy monitoring unit, neuro-ICU, or med-psych unit would all be common settings for BNNP training.

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

YES! As BNNP is a field inherently interdisciplinary, and as such, there are marked differences in programs based on (among other factors) whether training is housed primarily in one department, the other, or supported equally by both. Settings vary widely and thus some fellowships will have more of a geriatric/neurodegenerative clinical focus, while others may have strengths in neuromodulation, acute medical hospital/consultation settings, neurorehabilitation, epilepsy, movement disorders, research, and more.

All programs must follow the UCNS common program requirements and BNNP specific requirements which can be found here: [https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program\\_Requirements.aspx](https://www.ucns.org/Online/Accreditation/Program_Requirements.aspx)

*Document created by Joseph J. Cooper, MD, FANPA and Sheldon Benjamin, MD, DLFAPA, FANPA, FAAN  
Supported by the AADPRT Recruitment Committee, created (September 14, 2021)\*\**