

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS

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American
Association of
Neurological
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Congress of
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CONGRESS OF
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American Association of Neurological Surgeons and Congress of Neurological Surgeons Commitment on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), and the AANS/CNS Joint Section on Pain (www.painsection.org and @painsection) are committed to the neurosurgical treatment of acute and chronic pain, as well as to advancing pain care through education, research and advocacy. We are also committed to countering the U.S. opioid epidemic.

Leading the Way in the Treatment of Pain

Historically, neurosurgeons have been at the forefront of the treatment of pain for many decades, producing seminal texts describing mechanisms of pain and devising innovative surgical techniques. Additionally, organized neurosurgery has created the largest prospective database of spinal surgery patients to improve patient selection and outcomes for these procedures. We continue to lead the way in advancing surgical therapies that relieve pain through less invasive approaches. Neurosurgeons were also the original practitioners of both ablative nervous system procedures for intractable pain as well as nondestructive neuromodulation techniques such as spinal cord stimulation. These therapies represent an alternative to opioid-based therapy, and we are committed to bringing forward more treatments such as these that improve function and quality of life while reducing reliance on opioids. Neurosurgeons are also researching enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols that reduce postoperative opioid requirements.

Educating Clinicians and the General Public

Neurosurgeons educate clinicians and the general public about the appropriate use of surgical therapies for the treatment of pain and their opioid-sparing benefits. We are constantly working to increase awareness regarding these advantages and train neurosurgeons in the best practices of these procedures to improve long term outcomes. In addition, we are actively educating our colleagues in both appropriate opioid prescribing practices and in the use of opioid-free post-surgical analgesic regimens.

Supporting Appropriate Opioid Prescribing

Neurosurgeons support appropriate prescribing of opioid analgesics for those patients who benefit from them both before and after surgery. We believe that post-surgical patients do not have uniform opioid requirements and are collaborating on evidence-based prescribing guidelines that take this into account so as not to create an undue burden on patients and clinicians. Moreover, we support the use of prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) and have sponsored multispecialty efforts to improve nationwide interoperability of these databases to reduce cross-border doctor shopping.

Collaborating to Solve the Opioid Epidemic

Finally, neurosurgeons believe that the opioid epidemic will only be alleviated through multidisciplinary collaboration. We have endeavored to participate in all significant ongoing federal and national organization efforts in this area, including serving as members of the American Medical Association-led Opioid Task Force and the AMA Pain Task Force. Therefore, we are eager to join and support the efforts of the National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic as a Network Organization.