



## American Board of Neurological Surgery statement regarding Dr. Christopher Duntsch

The story of Dr. Duntsch is a tragedy involving, among other things, serious institutional failures at hospitals that allowed him to continue to operate even after many horrible outcomes and behavioral red flags.

In fact, Dr. Duntsch never started the ABNS certification process after completing residency. The entire purpose of ABNS certification is to identify and “Certify” only those neurosurgeons who have demonstrated both, in their regular practice (through submission and peer ABNS review of their practice data which includes indications for surgery, surgical technique, and outcomes) and in the context of a thorough in person oral exam, to possess knowledge, skills, and professional attributes to provide safe and competent neurosurgical care.

We respectfully suggest that IF Dr. Duntsch had applied for ABNS Certification, he would have been unable to successfully complete the process given his practice history, personality traits and probable knowledge deficits. Based on press accounts, Dr. Duntsch’s total post-residency case volume did not satisfy ABNS minimum thresholds for the peer review portion of the process. Perhaps that is why he never applied for ABNS Certification.

It is important to note that the ABNS is continuously re-evaluating its processes in an effort to better serve the public. In that regard, the ABNS recently began to require neurosurgeons to submit cases for peer review *immediately* following the completion of a seven-year residency -- the longest residency in medicine. This allows the ABNS to intervene early, taking appropriate remedial measures to assist those who are well intentioned but have notable deficits in their knowledge and/or skills, thus allowing the individual an opportunity to make adjustments to their practice. We are confident this new requirement will also provide the ABNS further insight essential to identify bad actors such as Dr. Duntsch.

This tragic case highlights the critical importance of verifying that a neurosurgeon is certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery. While no certification or similar process is 100% perfect, we believe that the ABNS has developed a rigorous process to identify competent, knowledgeable and most importantly safe neurosurgeons.

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