



HEALTHCARE HAPPENINGS



The Challenges and Charms of General Surgery

[By Roshan Tolani]

Surgeons treat a broad spectrum of operative conditions such as injuries, diseases, and deformities through surgeries. Primarily, they are physicians, dentists, or veterinarians with a specialization in surgery.

Like other physicians, surgeons examine patients, perform diagnoses and interpret them, decide on the form of surgery, counsel, and provide preoperative, operative, and postoperative care to surgical patients. Surgery is a very responsibility-heavy job, as it is surgeons' duty to handle critically ill patients.

The various functions of surgery include correcting physical malfunctioning, repairing bones and tissues, and performing preventive surgeries on patients with debilitating disorders.

General Surgery

Many surgeons prefer to specialize in a specific area such as orthopedic, neurological, cardiovascular, or plastic surgery. However, those who opt for general surgery focus mainly on abdominal and thyroid glands.

As most general surgeons work closely with other physicians and surgeons, it is important for them to be familiar with the main facets of other surgical specialties and medicine in order to be able to identify problems in those areas and judge when to refer a patient to a specialist.

Besides hospitals, surgeons also work in government agencies, schools, private practices, and organizations.

According to the Department of Labor, 14.6% of all practicing physicians specialize in surgery.

Most Common Surgical Procedures

Obstetric:

- episiotomy
- repair of obstetric laceration
- cesarean section
- artificial rupture of amniotic membrane

Non-obstetric:

- amputation
- appendectomy
- circumcision
- dental extraction
- herniorrhaphy

Work Conditions

Surgeons typically work in well-lit, sterile environments but have to stand for several hours. The work is unpredictable and can stretch on for long and irregular hours. Working 60 hours a week is not unusual for full-time surgeons. In fact, only 8% of surgeons work part-time. Moreover, surgeons also have to deal with patients' anxiety and emergency visits to hospitals and nursing homes.

Education and Residency

In the U.S., medical education spans many years. In the first two years of their

education, students get basic training, and then the next two years are spent focusing on clinical training in affiliated school hospitals. Students decide on their specialties usually by the beginning or middle of their fourth years. The residency for surgeons is five years. In case of subspecialties, they receive two additional years of training and practice.

Salaries

General surgeons' salaries depend on their expertise, experiences, geographic locations, and individual hospitals. However, in general, their annual salaries range from \$249,700 to \$336,000.

According to a recent salary survey, surgeons' salaries, depending on their work experiences, vary as follows:

1-2 years: \$226,000

3 or more: \$291,000

Maximum: \$520,000

Surgery may not be the best career in terms of salary and work conditions, but the field has its own charms. Despite its challenges, it is a great profession for people who derive satisfaction from freeing people from their physical traumas.

ON THE NET

Physicians and Surgeons
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos074.htm



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Health Guide USA

healthguideusa.org/careers/physician_work_in_general.htm

General Surgeon Job Description

www.healthcare-trainingcenter.com/jobs-surgeon.asp

Careers in Medicine: Specialty Information

www.aamc.org/students/cim/pub_surgery.htm

Surgery

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surgery

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