



Military Neurosurgery: A Range of Service Options

Richard P Menger MD; Michael E. Wolf MD; Richard Lang III; Donald R. Smith MD; Anil Nanda MD, FACS; Peter B. Letarte

MD

LSUHSC

United States Navy

United States Air Force (Retired)



Introduction

The path to military neurosurgical practice can include a number of accession pathways. This paper is an objective comparison of the fiscal, tangible, and intangible benefits provided through different military neurosurgery career paths and those of civilian practice.

Methods

Neurosurgeons may train through full time military active duty training, the Navy Active Duty Delay for Specialist Program (military sponsored civilian training), Navy Reserve Training in the Medical Specialties Program, or civilian neurosurgery. These modalities were evaluated on the basis of economic data during residency and the initial three year service commitment following. Where applicable military base pay, basic allowance for housing/subsistence, variable special pay, board certified pay, incentive pay, multi-year special pay, reserve drill pay, civilian salary, income tax, and other tax incentives were analyzed using publicly available data regarding military pay charts and tables.

Results

Active duty neurosurgeons garnered \$1,479,494.32 in effective income during residency and the three years immediately following. Civilians earned \$ 1,947,048.00 in that time; military sponsored civilian training received \$ 1,015,934.88, and reserve service generated \$ 2,042,993.81. Civilians had lower residency pay, higher starting salaries, increased taxes, malpractice insurance cost, and increased overhead. Active duty service saw higher residency pay, lower starting salary, tax incentives, increased benefits, and almost no associated overhead including malpractice coverage. Reserve service saw a combination of civilian benefits with supplementation of reserve drill pay in return for weekend drill and the possibility of deployment and activation. Intangibles include esprit de corps, humanitarian, leadership, and operational opportunities.

Conclusions

Being a neurosurgeon in the armed services is extremely rewarding. From a financial perspective, ignoring intangibles, this article shows an expected fiscal parity between the cumulative salaries of active duty and civilian career paths while highlighting the reserve service option. We hope that those curious about or considering undertaking service in the United States military benefit from our accounting and review of these comparative paths.

Learning Objectives

- 1) Discuss the options available for military service as a neurosurgeon
- 2) Discuss the benefits and limitations of active duty and reserve neurosurgery service
- 3) Discuss the non-economic benefits to military service as a neurosurgeon

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Full references available upon request