Alumni – Notarianni Neurosurgery

Audio	Video
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text in center of screen: Neurosurgery
[Dr. Notarianni] My name is Christina Notarianni. I graduated from med school in 2003, and I practice here at LSU Health and Ochsner L SU. I do neurosurgery, so I'm a professor of neurosurgery. I'm board certified in just general neurosurgery and I'm also board certified in pediatric neurosurgery.	Woman with fair complexion and shoulder length dark hair wearing a black dress and a white lab coat. She is sitting in front of a dark blue washed background Text: Christina Notarianni, M D Neurosurgery L S U Health Shreveport
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: Why did you choose Neurosurgery?
[Dr. Notarianni] When I came to medical school, I don't even think I really knew what neurosurgery was. (Laughing) And I remember my first year, my former boss, Dr. Nanda, gave a lecture on neuro vasculature, I think it was. And he showed a video of him clipping an aneurysm under the microscope. And I thought that was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. And then I really liked neuroanatomy and neuroscience my first two years. I thought that was so interesting to learn about. And when I started my third year rotations, I started in general surgery and then did neurosurgery right after that. And that's when I realized I really want to be in the O.R. I loved doing that, so I knew I want to do something in surgery. And then when I did neurosurgery, it basically had everything that I like the most out of medical school. And so it had all of that neuroscience and neuroanatomy. And then it had the complexity of surgeries and a variety of surgeries. And so that's when I just said I'm going to go for it.	Dr. Notarianni on camera

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[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: Where did you complete your training?
[Dr. Notarianni] So I did my residency here. When I became a third year student, they got accredited for a residency program in neurosurgery here, and I matched here. So I did six years of residency here, and that has now increased for neurosurgery resident to seven years with 80 hour work week. And then I did a one year fellowship afterwards at the University of Tennessee and St. Jude Research Hospital in pediatric neurosurgery.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: What do you enjoy most about Neurosurgery?

Audio	Video
[Dr. Notarianni] I really like the variety of my specialties, so really focusing on Pedes. So one of the reasons I went into pediatrics was, one, I love working with children, but also because in Pedes, you don't have to just be a tumor surgeon or a vascular surgeon or a spine surgeon. You can do a lot of different things for kids and it just there's a variety of cases and it's just a lot of fun every day to take care of patients. And now I know my patients literally from some of them from the day they're born or even before they're born, you know, all the way through their life. And I get really develop a relationship with their family and it's something really meaningful to me and really neurosurgery, some of the things that we do, it's just amazing to see our patients recover and what we do. And so, for instance, I had a 16 year old who had a massive spinal cord tumor and came into my office paralyzed, couldn't walk, and we took that out. And, you know, he walked back in my office today. And so seeing those were kind of recoveries and in neurosurgery and that that's not just for children, too, but seeing those kind of recoveries and the impact you can have on someone's life is just truly amazing. And it makes me grateful for me to be able to do my job every day.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: What is the hardest thing about Neurosurgery?
[Dr. Notarianni] The highs are really high, the lows are really low. So while you can do something amazing, like take out a brain tumor or spinal cord tumor and see someone recover from that, you also see people die a lot - head injuries, you know, terminal brain cancer, child abuse - those are really, really sad things. And especially we talk about brain tumors in children, malignant brain tumors in children. And dealing that without families is really, really difficult sometimes. And, you know, it, that can be really, really low and really hard.	Dr. Notarianni on camera

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[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: Are there certain personality traits that fit your specialty?
[Dr. Notarianni] I mean, I'm interviewing residents, residency candidates right now, and I get that question a lot. Well, what are we looking for? And so if you look at my residents right now and you look at the faculty that work here, you would see that we're kind of these, we're fun people, like we like to have a good time and, you know, we all have life outside of neurosurgery and that's important to us and our families. And so when we are looking for people in neurosurgery, I'm looking for someone who's motivated. I'm looking for someone who has a good attitude, a good work ethic, because it is hard. It is difficult, residency's hard. But even out in practice sometimes, you know, you can have long hours and you need that dedication. So I think someone who's really dedicated to their field but also appreciates things outside of just doing neurosurgery and someone who's going to work hard and get along with other people. Like nobody likes dealing with a difficult physician in any specialty.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: How is your work-life balance?

Audio	Video
[Dr. Notarianni] So now I think it's great. I think, you know, in residency it's a little bit different. Your time is a little bit more constrained for sure. But once I'm out in practice now, I have a much better control of my schedule. And actually I think that sometimes I'm lucky because I can look ahead and say, you know what, my children are something at school that day and I need to be there and I can move people around in my clinic or maybe delay a surgery start or something like that. And so I have a lot of flexibility. But I mean, typically I'm up here at 7 a.m. I get to usually drop my kids off at school. I come up here, I work all day and then I'm home by 6:00 or so at night and it seems to work pretty well. My call is not too difficult. I'm in a good call group now, so, you know, I take about six calls a month, seven calls a month maybe. And, you know, it's manageable. It's definitely manageable. People always seem to worry about that. I think a lot of students worry about that, like I'm never going have a life outside of neurosurgery. But actually, if you looked at all of our faculty and not just me, I think you would see that we all have a real life outside of neurosurgery. And we we spend time with our families. We go on trips. We we get away from here. And and that's because we all work well together. And also we recognize the importance of having a life outside of medicine.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: How do you handle work stress?

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[Dr. Notarianni] You know, I like to spend time with my family. That's that's always kind of reassuring. I exercise. So I like to run or go walk and get outside. You you know, I try to do that every day if I can. If I can't, then try to do it as much as I can during the week. It does help relieve stress. And then also just getting together with like friends after work, even if it's just like a quick lunch or, you know, a quick drink or dinner. I think it's really important to do those kind of things and just step away for a minute and just have some downtime and get away. And and especially if you've got a lot going on with a patient, sometimes you need that kind of reset to look at things from a fresh perspective.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: What is the most important thing to know before choosing a specialty?
[Dr. Notarianni] One is, I would say don't let the length of of the residency deter you from wanting to do neurosurgery. If you enjoy that, if you enjoy being in the operating room and you feel like neurosurgery would be a good fit for you, I would not let the the thought of residency and that that time period deter you from it. Because while that is seven, years in the reality, that's a such a tiny little part of your time practicing medicine. And while it's difficult, it also you build some great bonds with a lot of people within your own department and other residents that I mean, some of them become lifelong friends for you and so or colleagues. So I would say don't let the length of residency deter you, because I think a lot of medical students sort of look at that. And I don't think that that should be your determinant on why you choose neurosurgery or any other specialty.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: What do you wish you had known before choosing Neurosurgery?

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[Dr. Notarianni] There's not anything in particular to neurosurgery. I think more of just, you know, as a medical student, I think a lot of students kind of get in this mentality of like a lot of my friends are doing O B / G Y N and I'm probably gonna do O B / G Y N, or, you know, I saw a lot of Pedes. So I'm just going to do Pedes. And I think it's really important for students to keep an open mind when they're doing rotations, even if they really think like, Hey, I want to do ortho, I've always wanted to do ortho, because you might find that there's something different out there that's a better fit for you. And you know, and I don't like when people kind of pigeonhole themselves and restrict themselves because they think like, Well, I did all my work in Ortho, so I'm going to do Ortho or all my work in neurosurgery and I'm going to neurosurgery. I think, you know, keep an open mind because what you choose as your career for the rest of your life. And so you want to make that choice totally based on what is best for you and not listen to people saying like, oh your residency's seven years or that's so hard, or, you know, why don't you do this? It's so that's what I try to tell students a lot, is to just really do a lot of soul searching and kind of gut check when they're really deciding on a specialty. Because I think a lot of students kind of get in this well, like this and this and this. And I think if you really want to narrow it down, you really got a gut check and think about what what you want long term for you and your family and whatever, whoever other people are involved in your life and and kind of use that as your motivation moving forward.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: Is neurosurgery a very competitive residency?

Audio	Video
[Dr. Notarianni] So neurosurgery is competitive. And case in point, we have two residency spots every year. I have almost 300 applications this year for a spot. So obviously, we're not interviewing 300 students. We're going to interview about 40. So it is very competitive. There's about 100 programs across the country. And so this will change now because step one is going pass fails. I don't know how that's going to factor in down the line, but you know, a lot of that right now is we're using how you're performing in your clerkships, your deans letter, your grades, your step one scores, or step two scores as well, to kind of see like where you stand as a student. And because there has to be some kind of determination to select applicants. So it is definitely competitive. I think I tell students they always want to know about neurosurgery. And I say, you know, you have to work hard. You have to work hard to to be competitive in neurosurgery. I recommend doing some research, not taking research time, but doing some research within our department, you know, working on some papers and having some publications while you're a student that adds a lot of enhancement to your application. And honestly, even if a student comes to me as a first year and says they want to do neurosurgery and they get involved, they may in a couple of years say ENT is what I want to do or something else, and that's totally fine. We're not going to be upset. It's your life, you know, it's what you want to do. But even if you've done a lot of research in our department and you have some publications that's going to add weight to your application, no matter what field you go into. So I think that I try to stress that with the students as well. But it is it is a competitive residency and that's probably not going to change for a long time. So I don't see the residency spots increasing in neurosurgery across the country and that's what's going to keep it competitive.	Dr. Notarianni on camera

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[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: How are the 7 years of residency structured?

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[Dr. Notarianni] In our residency, I think your first two years are probably the most difficult and I think that your intern year, you do some off service work that's required by our neurosurgery accreditation and then you do some time in neurosurgery and your second year you're kind of the junior guy on our service or girl. And so you have a lot of time on the floor, a lot of a lot of call. And you're not in the O.R. as much, but once you get to your third year, you're doing a lot of you're doing some more of service rotations, like to the VA and things like that. And so you're getting some a lot more time in the O.R. And so from there that O.R. time really compounds every year and you have less and less call and you start moving from in house call here at L S U to home call. And that's all just a totally different experience. So while, yes, your first two years are probably hard, just it's hard because it's like drinking from a fire hose, you know, I mean, it's just there's so much information that you're in, you're trying to keep up. I mean, you know, an intern, they know a lot coming in, but they're nervous and they should be they totally should be nervous, you know. So we just try to stress to them and like the second year residents, like, please ask for help. We're here to help you. Like, no one expects you to get everything the first time, like, you know, if you don't know the answer, then go ask somebody like, it's totally fine. We'd rather you do that than be put yourself out on your own and and be at risk of harming someone or putting yourself in a bad position. So I think the first two years are hard. But I think after that, you know, in terms of the way our program at least is structured, you have a lot more operative time. You're doing a lot of, you know, your autonomy starts to really step up and you can really see that confidence develop in the residents. I mean, their third year, they might still be a little shaky, but by the time our fourth year residents come around, I mean, they're very skilled. They know what they're talking about when they call you and when they may be thrown off for a few things. But they they really know what they're doing. And it's impressive to see that, you know.	Dr. Notarianni on camera

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[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the bottom center of the screen. White text above it reads: How is the gender balance in Neurosurgery?
[Dr. Notarianni] So I was the first female in our program, [Off camera: Really? Okay.] And I was the first one to graduate from our program, a female. And then first match resident and then as a female and then first person obviously to graduate as a female. And then the next person that finished after me was two years ago. I'm trying to think like I'm like thinking about it's hard. I misplace all the residents now. I'm like, yeah, so. And right now we I've been a real advocate for getting more women in our program. And so so we had we've had one, two graduate, now. They both actually had babies in in residency. They both got married and had children and their chief year of residency. And then right now we have Rachel, Dani, we have two, two more women in our program. And so and they're great too. So every year I'm like pushing for women to come in and we have a good amount of women applying to neurosurgery, but it's still a it's still a women in neurosurgery is still a huge minority. So I think in terms of residents, it's probably up to about maybe 15 maybe 15% women, maybe 20. But if you talk about women outside, out in practice, board certified Neurosurgeons, It's still at about 10%.	Dr. Notarianni on camera
[Silence]	Dark blue background with animated blocks. L S U Health Shreveport Foundation logo is at the top center of the screen. Text in gold and white font reads: Special thanks to Doctor Christina Notarianni, Neurosurgery, L S U Health Shreveport Class of 2003. L S U Health Shreveport, 15 01 Kings Highway, Shreveport, Louisiana 7 1 1 0 3