**President’s Prize Submission**

How can the spinal trainees of today become the best spine specialists of tomorrow?

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**Abstract**

Spinal trainees face a significant challenge: focusing on our personal training while promoting and advancing our specialty. Three pillars are necessary to achieve these goals: personal motivation, a qualified mentor, and a common training platform.

Anyone who has managed to surpass the difficulties of medical school and residency has displayed traits of perseverance. The continual search for excellence beyond the required minimum, the humility to say “I do not know” in order to learn, and the constant questioning of established knowledge are the basis for personal growth. In striving to be the very best, however, one’s inner drive to keep learning must be encouraged and supervised in order for personal abilities to thrive.

A qualified mentor will recognize, help maintain and develop this motivation by setting a human and professional example, promoting personal initiative, and sharing both positive and negative experiences. The mentor needs to create a synergetic learning atmosphere in which honest mistakes are considered learning opportunities. More specifically, instruction should cover patient-doctor communication, clinical judgment, surgical skills, educational project development, and supervised original research.

In order to optimize the mentor-trainee relationship and provide uniform criteria amongst trainees, there is the need for a common, internationally acknowledged platform that derives prestige by setting evidence-based high standards in care, education and research. It should include formal training for the mentor and an up-to-date syllabus for the trainee with meaningful motivational milestones. Affordable theoretical and practical resources should be equally accessible, using technology as well as direct exchange to share the positive particularities and overcome the local limitations of each training center. Ultimately, this platform should provide the network to promote cooperation beyond any interpersonal competitive attitude.

The nature of our profession is that we demand the highest standards of care and attention for our patients. To keep improving outcomes, it is essential that we devote the same level of attention and care to training the spine-specialists of tomorrow.