

# The Foundations of Functional Neurology



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By Darcy Dane, DC, DACNB, and Dana Brindisi, DC, DACNB, CFMP

A chiropractic neurologist (*aka* a functional neurologist) is a physician who specializes in neurological rehabilitation. At Carolina Brain Center, both of us—Dr. Darcy Dane, founder of the Center, and Dr. Dana Brindisi—are board certified chiropractic neurologists. We treat patients with a wide variety of neurological conditions. Our non-drug approach aims to create permanent neuroplastic changes that restore and/or improve proper neurological function. While our approach is drug-free, we have both been trained in natural or functional medicine. This helps us treat the whole person.

The journey to becoming a functional neurologist is not for the faint at heart. A functional neurologist must be a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy or a doctor of chiropractic. We have both completed our doctorate work in chiropractic medicine, giving us a well-rounded understanding of the body as whole. Being able



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to view our patients as a whole—as opposed to a sum of his or her parts—allows us to comprehensively evaluate and treat them.

## CHIROPRACTIC TRAINING AND FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGY

Many do not know that the curriculum of a chiropractic education is equivalent to that of a medical school curriculum, with the absence of pharmacology. Chiropractors have completed the same number of hours as medical doctors in the areas of anatomy and physiology, pathology, microbiology, neurology, radiology, psychology, biochemistry, diagnosis, EENT and orthopedics.

Functional neurology demands further, post-graduate training. After completion of graduate school, we both did our post-graduate study in functional neurology through the Carrick Institute of Clinical Neuroscience and Rehabilitation. At the entry level, a two-year program is completed with studies in a wide range of neurological areas (*see box*).

## HANDS-ON TRAINING: GRAND ROUNDS

Throughout the years, we have both completed many hours of hands-on clinical training under the tutelage of Professor Ted Carrick. During grand rounds, a wide variety of neurological infirmities are presented. Each patient was examined by Dr. Carrick in a room where doctors (the students) could observe. Dr. Carrick would prescribe therapies and the doctors would perform the therapies, observe the outcomes, and relay the information back to Dr. Carrick. At the end of each day, cases were discussed in detail. Grand rounds help to develop the skill to think critically about a patient's case. It is one thing to learn neurological anatomy and physiology; it is quite another to be able to apply the knowledge, develop a therapeutic strategy and derive a successful outcome.

Functional neurologists can complete specialty training in movement disorders, brain injury and concussion, vestibular rehabilitation, migraine, and childhood developmental disorders through the Carrick Institute of Clinical Neuroscience and Rehabilitation.

## FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

Beyond functional neurology, both of us have completed courses in functional medicine—training that is imperative if we are to be able to treat the whole person. Training is intensive and ongoing. Again, critical thinking is developed; it is important for any doctor to understand that just because something is natural and good for one patient, it may not be appropriate for another patient. We understand that a cookie-cutter approach simply does not work and can harm patients. We have been trained to look at the body as a whole because nothing in the body or brain works in isolation.

Functional neurologists consider themselves lifelong learners, continuing their education in the fields of clinical neuroscience and functional medicine yearly to stay up to date with best clinical practice, current neuroscience research and rehabilitation. It is our passion to serve humankind with integrity and compassion. **h&h**

*At the Carolina Brain Center, Drs. Dane and Brindisi provide a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to evaluate and treat neurological Conditions. For more information about functional neurology, contact them at: Carolina Brain Center, 6404 Falls of Neuse Road, Suite 201, Raleigh, NC 27615. Telephone: (919) 703-0207; email: [info@carolinabraincenter.com](mailto:info@carolinabraincenter.com); [www.CarolinaBrainCenter.com](http://www.CarolinaBrainCenter.com).*

## FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGY TRAINING

An intensive, two-year, post-graduate curriculum in functional neurology spans a wide range of study, including:

- Neuron theory
- Neuromuscular applications
- Peripheral nervous system
- Reflexogenic systems
- Autonomic nervous system
- Cerebellar cortices
- Spinal cord
- Brain
- Cranial Nerves
- Neurological diagnosis
- Sensory systems
- Pain
- Motor systems
- Neurological imaging
- Movement disorders
- Cardiac function
- Neurological examination
- Clinical applications