

ACFAS 2021 Virtual Fellowship Fair: Get to Know the Fellow Questionnaire

Fellow Name:

Ali M. Saleh DPM, AACFAS

Fellowship Program:

North Jersey Reconstructive Foot and Ankle Fellowship

City/State:

Lyndhurst, New Jersey

Program Director:

Michael Subik DPM, FACFAS

How many Attendings do you work with regularly?

8 attendings

Describe the diversity of your cases so far in fellowship. (For example, has your experience included TAR? Is there an emphasis on: Pediatrics? Sports Medicine? Deformity correction? Complex reconstruction? What percentage of your cases are trauma? Rearfoot/ankle? Forefoot? Please be as descriptive as you'd like.

Our fellowship does offer a wide variety of cases, however our main focus is limb salvage, management of acute and chronic Charcot neuroarthropathy, and complex diabetic reconstruction of the foot and ankle using Ilizarov external fixation and intramedullar beaming/nailing. Because of this, we are involved with a fair amount of wound care as well, where we integrate orthoplastics techniques for limb salvage, such as muscle flaps, fasciocutaneous flaps, skin grafts, etc.

Approximately 30-40% of our cases involve foot and ankle trauma as we regularly take foot and ankle trauma call at our main institution. We do have some sports medicine cases (i.e. Achilles tendon reconstructions, ankle scopes, soft tissue injuries and ligamentous reconstruction of the ankle) that we do with one of our attendings regularly at one of our surgery centers.

We undoubtedly perform more high end rearfoot/ankle reconstructive procedures rather than forefoot procedures (i.e. flatfoot/cavus foot reconstruction). However, we do have the occasional Lapidus that we would do.

How many days per week do you typically spend in the OR? In clinic? Do you have your own "fellow" clinic?

Typically, we spend 2 full days in the OR, Tuesday mornings, Thursday afternoons, and Friday all day. However, this is based on a week-by-week basis based on any emergent procedures that come in that need management.

I have office hours where we have patients that I see and manage for 3 mornings out of the week out of our private office in Lyndhurst, NJ. Apart from that, I have two afternoons of clinic in the hospital weekly that takes place in the Fellow's Reconstructive Foot and Ankle Clinic located at St. Mary's General Hospital. Additionally, I have a wound care clinic where I see complicated wounds at our Wound Care Center once per week. All of these are performed under the auspice of Dr. Subik.

How many surgical cases do you typically scrub per month?

I typically scrub about 25 cases per month.

What conferences have you attended/are you encouraged to attend?

Due to the pandemic, we have been limited this year from attending all the conferences in person. However, we are strongly encouraged to attend the Baltimore Limb Deformity Course, ACFAS arthroscopy course/Advanced arthroscopy course, ACFAS annual conference, CLESS conference.

How would you describe your director's teaching style?

I would say that his teaching style is very much so interactive and educational with a strong emphasis of understanding not only "the how's", but also "the why's". He allows the fellow to really gain a full experience in all that he is involved with, whether it be evaluating and managing patients, working patients up for surgery, working upcoming cases with case-specific algorithms, and full hands-on experience in the OR and in cadaveric lab settings. I also believe that there is a level of progressive autonomy as the fellowship year progresses as the fellow is trusted more.

How is research incorporated into your experience? What resources are provided/available?

Research is a big component of the fellowship. I am currently involved and in the process of publishing 9 papers. I work in concert with the residents, and am involved with weekly research meetings either virtual or in person with the residents. Additionally, we have volunteer research assistants that help us data mine for our papers. We have a virtual library available to us to choose from the most common journals in our field and in orthopedics, plastic surgery, and vascular to use as resources from Dr. Subik's alumni access to NYCPM online library.

Do you take any "call"? If so, how often? What type of call? (general vs. trauma, hospital vs. private practice?)

I take one week of call at one of the institutions that we go to, however the main institution that we frequently go to, my director is on call quite frequently. This means that if an emergency comes in that needs management, the responsibility lies on the fellow to see the patient along with the assistance of the residents. Emergent surgeries or add-on cases that are performed by any of the attendings on the fellowship panel requires attendance and assistance by the fellow. Foot and ankle trauma call along with regular podiatry call is taken at our main institution by my director quite regularly as mentioned before.

How many hospitals/surgery centers are you credentialed at?

I am currently privileged at two hospitals - St. Mary's General Hospital, and Hackensack University Medical Center. I work out of one surgery center currently. And am in the final process of getting privileged at a 3rd hospital in the next few weeks.

What is your didactic schedule like? What academic opportunities are available to you during fellowship? (Cadaver labs, journal club, radiology conference, etc.)

I am involved in virtual academic grand rounds presentations every Monday and Friday from 6PM-8PM where we have lecturers from all over the country giving us presentations. Additionally, I have research meetings every Thursday night with the residents and Dr. Subik. And two Tuesday's out of the month, we perform a cadaver lab where we practice surgical techniques. Radiology rounds are something that usually take place on Wednesday afternoons with Dr. Subik after his wound care clinic is completed.

Is your fellowship affiliated with a residency program? If yes, what are your responsibilities? How often are you interacting with residents (What % of cases?)

Yes, our fellowship is affiliated with a residency program. I am involved heavily in education of residents, along with performing research, and thus I am interacting with residents quite often throughout the week and on the weekends. I would say almost all of our cases have residents involved. My role in certain cases that are not considered to be complex and is deemed to be a "resident caliber case" is more of an educational role. Cases that are more complex is where I get more hands-on.

Are you able to collect cases for board certification?

Yes, I am able to collect cases for board certification if the cases are booked under myself, as I am privileged as an attending at our institutions where we do surgery.

When should interested applicants visit? What does a visit look like? What is the interview process like at your program?

Interested applicants should contact our Fellowship Coordinator Mr. Johnny Burks at jrburks94@gmail.com to set up a visit. It is hard to say when is a good time due to the pandemic. However, a visit can be scheduled once coordinated with Mr. Burks. A visit usually is on a day spent with Dr. Subik in the wound care center on Wednesdays, or on Fridays, which is his surgical day. The interview process last year was virtual, but usually, we have applicants come to Lyndhurst, NJ where an introduction to the program and first round of interviews are held initially. Afterwards, the second round of interviews for the finalized applicant pool is held virtually via a Skype meeting.

Do you have a co-fellow? What percentage of your cases are scrubbed with them?

No I do not have a co-fellow

What support is available for finding post-fellowship employment? What qualities make an applicant a good fit for your program?

I have received direct support from my fellowship director who helps in reaching out for

employment opportunities post-fellowship. The qualities that make an applicant a good fit for the program is one who is humble, self-driven, hard-working, positive attitude, one who has a high interest in diabetic limb salvage and reconstruction, and someone who is a team player.

Why did you apply for fellowship? And why did you choose your fellowship program?

I applied for fellowship so that I could gain a mastery on how to manage both conservatively and surgically foot and ankle pathology. Additionally, I wanted to learn how to manage patients in an office setting as I felt I lacked in residency. Billing/coding is something that I am also learning this year. I chose this fellowship because I have a strong interest in diabetic limb salvage and Charcot reconstruction, with an additional interest in Ilizarov ring fixation.

Any advice for future fellowship applicants?

Have a reason to do a fellowship, ensure that the fellowship that you are offered is one that you are interested and passionate about. To set yourself apart, take the time in your residency to do as many interesting cases and learn as much as you can. Be involved with extensive amounts of research to set yourself apart from others. Study frequently and read a journal article daily so that when the time comes to interview for programs or even jobs, you are well read and appear as a strong candidate to where ever it is you are applying to.