

Russell Saneto, DO, PhD

Pediatric Neurologist



Pediatric Neurologist ***Russell Saneto, DO, PhD***

Place of Employment:
Seattle Children's Research Hospital

Type of Work:
**Diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy,
neurogenetic disorders, and
neurometabolic disorders (in
particular mitochondrial disease)**

I count it a privilege to diagnosis and treat patients and their families. Although I am a pediatric physician, I have found that you not only treat the child, but the whole family. When a child gets sick, the whole family suffers.

Careers in the Spotlight: ***Pediatric Neurologist***

What do they do?

Diagnose and treat children with disorders of the brain and spinal cord.

What kind of training is involved?

Usually an MD (Medical Doctor) or DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine). The DO is trained specifically in understanding the muscular and skeletal system and how this may relate to disease or pain management.

What is a typical salary for a pediatric neurologist?

The average salary for a Pediatric Neurologist is \$220,000/year (\$106/hour).

Source: Physician Compensation Survey, by the American Medical Group Association (AMGA)

1. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Burbank, California (it is in the San Fernando Valley near Los Angeles).

2. What do you do (i.e. what career or field are you in, what is the title of your position)?

I am a pediatric neurologist who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy, neurogenetics disorders, and neurometabolic disorders (in particular, mitochondrial disease).

3. How did you choose your career? When did you first know this is the career you wanted?

I initially was interested in doing research in human genetics and metabolic disorders and got a PhD degree in human biological genetics. My interests changed somewhat, and I did a Post Doctoral Fellowship in brain development and eventually became an independent researcher in how the cells of the brain develop and grow. After several years of research, I then decided to return to medical school, and subsequently did a residency and fellowship in my current area of interest: epilepsy and neurometabolic/genetic diseases that give rise to epilepsy. I also have a very strong interest in the diagnosis and treatment of mitochondrial disease.

4. Did your family support your decision to pursue your career?

Somewhat. They helped me pay for my college education. This was a big step as no one in my family went to college, let alone graduated from college. They always had the dinner table ready and clothing washer and dryer empty when I came home from college/graduate school/medical school during vacations. They always encouraged me to live my dream.

5. What is the highest level of education you have?

The highest academic degree is a PhD, which I possess. I also have a DO degree (doctor of osteopathy: similar to a MD degree which allows me to practice medicine).

6. What is the highest level of education reached by other members of your family?

High school diploma.

7. What is the salary range for a person in your position?

Salary depends on where you live in the country (higher salaries are found in the Northeast part of the country). There is a pretty standard salary for someone in academic medicine that increases with your title: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor. Salary ranges are typically from \$100,000 to \$200,000/year (\$48-\$96/hour) for a neurologist practicing in the Northwest. The range is significantly higher if you are surgeon. The scale varies between specialists and general practitioners.

8. What do you like most about your job?

I count it a privilege to diagnose and treat patients and their families. Although I am a pediatric physician, I have found that you not only treat the child, but the whole family. When a child gets sick, the whole family suffers.

9. What do you like least about your job?

The long hours. I wish that I could spend more time with my family.

10. What's an abbreviated day-in-the-life of your job?

Most of my days start about 8 am and I usually end up at home about 8 pm at night. Some of my days are spent seeing patients, some are spent reading special tests looking for abnormal brain waves (brain activity), and some days are spent in the hospital looking after children who have neurological problems. There are days that I do a little of each and some days, just one of the duties.

11. How would you describe how you use bioinformatics in your work? If you don't use bioinformatics directly in your work, how has bioinformatics impacted your career field?

Our hospital has an electronic medical record: so all the patients' vital signs, notes, medications, and test results are within this medical record that can be looked at using computers. This allows easy and quick access about patient information.

I also am part of national studies that look at patients with specific diseases and their treatment. The entire patient's information (vital signs, disease, notes, special medications) are on the computer that I can access at any time. This allows multiple study caregivers across the nation the ability to look at the patient's data at any time from any place.

12. Do you have any recommendations for students who are interested in entering your field?

The hours are long and the salary is not extremely high, so do what you enjoy doing or else you will tire of it easily and end up doing something else.

13. What are your favorite hobbies?

Reading, riding bicycles, running, and walking our golden retriever.

Resources:

- Dr. Russell Santo's Homepage: <http://www.seattlechildrens.org/pediatrics/russell-p-saneto/>
- To learn about **Job Prospects** and **salary information for Physicians and Surgeons** visit the US Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos074.htm>
- "What is a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)?" from the American Osteopathic Association: http://www.osteopathic.org/index.cfm?PageID=ado_what