

An interview with John Anthony Morren, MD, Chief Neurology Resident



John Morren, MD, Neurology Fellow examining a patient

Why did you choose to attend the Neurology Resident Program at Cleveland Clinic Florida?

The philosophy of Cleveland Clinic as an institution is what drew me here. I'm an international medical graduate from Trinidad and Tobago, so the "patients first" philosophy and world-class care appealed to me. When you're prepared to offer that kind of care, you're equipped to deal with the challenges and able to help people wherever you go.

What do you mean by "challenges"?

I think it's a combination of many things. First, the complexity of cases we get because we are a referral center means that during my training, I'm exposed to a wide variety of neurological diagnoses. People travel near and certainly far. They come with their luggage and say that they've gone to many different neurologists and all of them pointed in one direction — to Cleveland Clinic Florida. At the end of the four-year training, you have run the gamut of neurological cases. You're well-prepared.

What is one thing you'll take from Cleveland Clinic Florida's culture that will set you apart wherever you go?

Humane professionalism. What I mean by that is that a lot of great doctors are very knowledgeable and have a good skill set, but that can be gained through personal ambition and good training. Cleveland Clinic Florida's standard for professionalism is head and shoulders above that. What you're doing for patients extends beyond offering a skill or service. It's the way you empathize with patients, the way you treat patients—regarding them as human beings. Counseling patients in the most appropriate way and really listening to them are skills that I've cultivated during my time here, mostly through good mentoring. I've heard from patients many times that I'm telling them the same diagnosis as another neurologist, but they appreciated the way I said it.

We don't have the answers to many neurological conditions yet, do we?

There are many diagnoses for which we don't have cures, but we do have treatments that can make a person's quality of life better. We also provide care through counseling and support. When people have a diagnosis that isn't curable, they often realize the relationship they have with you is therapeutic in itself. I feel a great sense of fulfillment in this field.

Where are you going next year?

To the mother ship: Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. I will be specializing in neuromuscular medicine. That specialty deals with illnesses like ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, myasthenia gravis, peripheral neuropathy, myopathy and the like. This is a very exciting new subspecialty of neurology.

After spending four years here, what have you noticed about Cleveland Clinic Florida that differentiates it from other healthcare systems?

We really try to humanize medicine. Patients often comment on how pleased they are that physicians take the time to talk to them. And you realize they're making a comparison. We are bringing humanity back to medicine.

The other thing is that we are a leading edge organization. We're able to make a diagnosis because we can test for it. Often when people come to us, they already have been tested for something that showed up negative. Physicians here have access to the latest technology and the most sophisticated tests. Coupled with the world-class expertise of the physicians using the technology, patients get their diagnosis and are able to begin an appropriate treatment program.

As a residency program, what sets us apart is that the faculty takes our dreams and runs with them. I believe that any person who does his residency here at Cleveland Clinic Florida, certainly in neurology, is building the foundation for a career that will enable him to go anywhere he wants. We have produced prolific neurologists who've excelled not just in the field of clinical neurology, but also academia and research. This program is a testimony to the great staff we have. To quote Isaac Newton, "If I have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."