

18 of the Best North American Spine Surgeons: 2014

BY ELIZABETH HOFHEINZ, M.P.H., M.ED.

When you want to know who the best is, you seek out the best. We decided to ask leading spine surgeons to select their peers who stand out.

Here is that list. It isn't the be-all and end-all list—but a list of who are arguably the finest spine physicians, teachers, investigators or administrators in the country.

This information was obtained via a telephone survey of thought leaders in the field. No one at OTW names anyone to the list.

The information in quotes is what we heard about these surgeons.

In alphabetical order, then, here are the top 18 spine physicians in America.

Todd J. Albert, M.D. is surgeon-in-chief and medical director and Korein-Wilson Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS). He is chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and a professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College. He is a past president of the Cervical Spine Research Society (CSRS). “He is incredibly accomplished and is an honest leader who is now bringing his expertise to HSS. His research really stands out and his knowledge of the cervical spine has helped us make great strides in the field.”

Neel Anand, M.D., M.Ch.Ortho. is director of Spine Trauma at the Cedars-Sinai Spine Center in Los Angeles and founder of the Anand Spine Group. “He has been the leading pioneer in the field of minimally invasive spinal deformity



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correction. He is helping to move this topic from enthusiasm without data to considered thought with comparable data to open techniques. He is particularly skilled, but is acknowledging the limitations of minimally invasive spinal deformity correction, which will only enhance his credibility.”

Keith H. Bridwell, M.D. is the J. Albert Key Distinguished Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Washington University School of Medicine, and he is chief of Pediatric and Adult Spinal Surgery in the Orthopaedic Department at Washington University in St. Louis. He is a former president of the Scoliosis Research Society (SRS). “He is one of the forefathers of modern adult spinal deformity surgery. He has made extensive contributions to the understanding of the normal sagittal plane, modernized techniques of pelvic fixa-

tion and deformity corrections, and the role of biologics in decreasing the pseudoarthrosis rate in adult deformity surgery. His incredible contribution to the literature on adult deformity speaks for itself. He currently leads a landmark randomized trial on the treatment of adult deformity surgery that will have significant impact on the field.”

Michael G. Fehlings, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.R.C.S.C., Ph.D. is a professor of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto, and is the Krembil Chair in Neural Repair & Regeneration at the Toronto Western Hospital in Ontario. Dr. Fehlings is a former president of the CSRS. “He is a world-renowned leader in spinal cord injury and myelopathy research and has a prolific lab. He is currently the chairman of AOSpine North America. He has won numerous awards from spine societies for his

research, and has garnered prestigious awards from the Canadian and British governments.”

Alan S. Hilibrand, M.D. is a professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Neurosurgery, as well as the director of Medical Education for the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the Rothman Institute and Jefferson Medical College. “He has made significant contributions to the peer-reviewed literature and has trained numerous prominent spine surgeons. He is an amazing surgeon who is able to deal with complex spine surgeries, is prominent in numerous academic spine societies, and is extremely well-respected.”

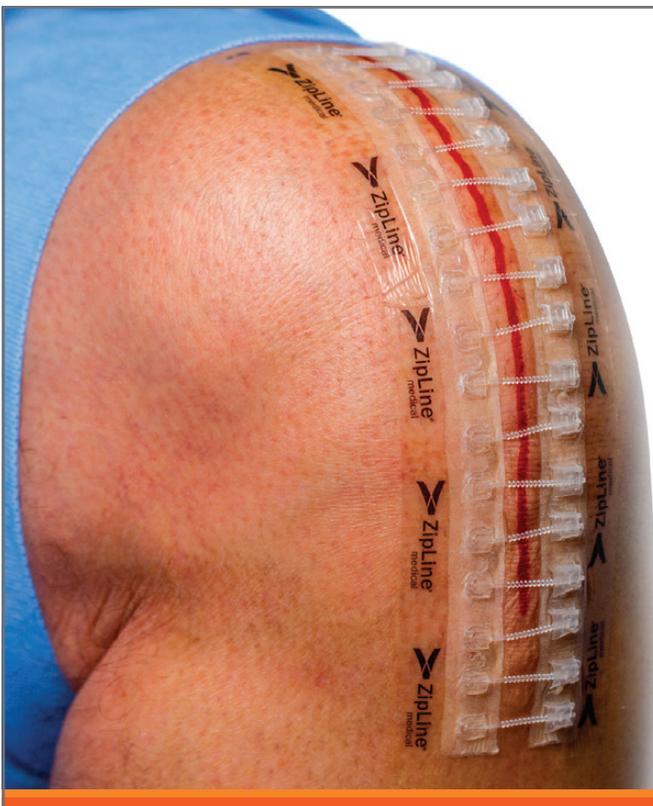
Lawrence J. Lenke, M.D. is the Jerome J. Gilden Distinguished Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and professor of Neurological Surgery at Washington University School of Medicine in Saint Louis. He is also chief of Spinal Surgery

and director of the Complex Spinal Deformity Institute and Fellowship at that institution. Dr. Lenke is a past president of the SRS. “He is a superb deformity surgeon and is often considered to be the best in the world. He has defined and changed the way we analyze and treat complex deformity through his research and teaching.”

Steven J. Lewis, M.D., M.Sc., FRCSC is an orthopedic spine surgeon at the Toronto Western Hospital and the Hospital for Sick Children. He is also an assistant professor of Neurosurgery at the University Health Network. “He is the most accomplished spinal deformity surgeon in all of Canada and has made many contributions to our field in the realm of complex pediatric and adult deformity surgery. He also is someone who thinks outside the box in developing unique and novel methods to treat difficult spinal problems.”

Michael F. O’Brien, M.D. is medical director of research at the Baylor Scoliosis Center. “He is a true master surgeon who is technically adept at treating all areas of the spinal column from the occiput to the sacrum-pelvis. He has an outstanding reputation as a clear and logical thinker and as someone who can always be trusted to provide a truly masterful technical execution of the surgical plan.”

David W. Polly, M.D. is a professor and chief of Spine Surgery in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Minnesota. He holds the James W. Ogilvie Chair. Dr. Polly is the vice president of the SRS. “He is a thought-leader and a very skilled spine surgeon who is able to handle all types of complex spine surgery. He is internationally renowned and highly active in numerous academic spine societies.”



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² Pepicello J, Yavorek H. Five year experience with tape closure of abdominal wounds. Surg Gynecol Obstet. 1989 Oct;169(4):310-4.

³ Data on file.

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K. Daniel Riew, M.D. is the Mildred B. Simon Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Washington University in St. Louis. He is also a professor of neurological surgery, the chief of the Surgical Spine Center, and director of the Cervical Spine Institute. Dr. Riew is a former president of the CSRS. "A brilliant cervical spine surgeon, he has defined many of the techniques we are utilizing. He has lectured extensively nationally and internationally, improving the treatment of these disorders in other portions of the globe."

Rick C. Sasso, M.D. is a founding member and president of Indiana Spine Group. He is also clinical associate professor and chief of Spine Surgery at the Indiana University School of Medicine. "He is innovative and ingenious, and he

has designed important tools used by spine surgeons around the world. He has participated in many clinical trials to help define the best ways to approach patients with spinal disease."

Frank J. Schwab, M.D. is clinical professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at New York University's Langone Medical Center. He is also chief of the Spinal Deformity Service at NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases. "He has worked tirelessly on the understanding of the normal spinal sagittal alignment. His work has had an incredible impact on the field, helping surgeons achieve appropriate alignment objectives for the patients. Besides being an excellent surgeon, researcher and administrator, Dr. Schwab is a renowned teacher with great integrity."

Christopher I. Shaffrey, M.D. is the Harrison Distinguished Professor of Neurological and Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Virginia. He is also director of the Spine Division at that institution. "He is an internationally regarded spine surgeon. He has particular expertise in complex deformity surgery and is known for handling the tough cases."

Justin Smith, M.D., Ph.D. is associate professor of Neurological Surgery and co-director of the University of Virginia Spine Center. He is also co-director of the Neurosurgery Spine Division. "He is one of the top young spinal researchers in the U.S. He is a prolific writer who is widely published and making an impact in spine. At the rate he is going, he is destined to become one of the top leaders in spine surgery in 5-10 years."

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Vincent C. Traynelis, M.D. is director of the Neurosurgery Spine Service and vice chairperson and professor at Rush University Medical Center. He is also the A. Watson Armour III & Sarah Armour Presidential Chair. Dr. Traynelis is a former president of the CSRS. “He is a neurosurgeon with keen interest in spinal disorders is an academic leader. A consummate teacher, he has trained a legion of spinal surgeons. Vince is a true gentleman and extremely well respected.”

Alexander R. Vaccaro, M.D., Ph.D. is president of the Rothman Institute and chairman of Orthopaedics at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. He also serves as co-director of the Spine Fellowship at Thomas Jefferson University and co-director of the Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center of the Delaware Valley. “His work is unparalleled. He has a finely-tuned sense of what is needed in our field, and he succeeds in moving us forward through his research and leadership.”

Jeffrey C. Wang, M.D. is chief of the orthopedic spine service at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. Additionally, he is professor in the departments of orthopedic surgery and neurosurgery. “He is a globally recognized spine surgeon who is on the boards of multiple spine societies including AOSpine, NASS and CSRS. He is currently the president of AOSpine International, the largest society for spine surgeons in the world. An outstanding speaker, teacher, researcher and surgeon.”

Thomas A. Zdeblick, M.D. is the chair of the Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. “He is an internationally renowned researcher, technically

superb surgeon, enthusiastic teacher of a myriad of spine surgeons, and an ethically impeccable physician. He has left his indelible signature on our literature of spinal disorders.” ♦

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