

Germany

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In Germany, the idea of neurosurgery as a separate medical specialty emerged in the 1920s in response to Cushing's role model, but can in part also be attributed to the preceding decades of German brain research. First attempts of professional emancipation failed due to political conditions. During National Socialism, the military significance of neurosurgical expertise was recognized. Only after World War II, the advancement of the new specialty gathered pace by the spread of multiple new specialized units. It is worth mentioning that apart from a nationwide coverage with neurosurgical health care the academic recognition of the specialty has also been fully achieved with regard to medical care, research, and teaching ¹⁾.

Neurosurgical workforce in Germany

[Neurosurgical workforce in Germany](#)

Trephination

[Evidence](#) exists that [trephination](#) was performed in [Germany](#) as early as the Stone Age. Late medieval barber-surgeons further developed [instruments](#) and [techniques](#) for this [procedure](#). Various surgeons performed individual cranial [operations](#) before the 1870s, and [neurosurgery](#) evolved as a distinct discipline in Germany around [1934](#). Before the 20th century, most cranial operations in Germany, as in other European countries, were performed for trauma. Since approximately [1870](#), a few individuals with a devoted interest in surgery of the [nervous system](#) have developed operative techniques for the [brain](#) and [spinal cord](#). [Wilhelm Wagner](#), Fedor Krause, Ernst von Bergmann, and Otfried Foerster were among these pioneers. Through independent research based on careful clinical observation, these physicians contributed significantly to an understanding of the [pathophysiology](#) of nervous system disorders that could be treated surgically. They designed techniques, such as those used for [intracranial pressure](#) regulation, and developed operative [procedures](#), such as the osteoplastic flap of Wagner, and cortical stimulation, which was performed by Krause and Foerster ²⁾.

The [German Society for Spine Surgery \(DWG\)](#) consists of [spinal surgeons](#) from neurosurgery, orthopedics, and trauma surgery. Besides, there is a section for spine surgery within the German Neurosurgery Society ([DGNC](#)).

The history of [spinal neurosurgery](#) in [Germany](#) goes with the [history](#) of general neurosurgery. The [German Neurosurgery Society](#) was founded in [1950](#) with 1,300 members. The society has several sections, including a spine section that organizes annual [meetings](#).

The German Spine Society was founded in [2006](#) by the fusion of 2 independent German Societies, namely the [German Society for Spine Research](#) (founded in [1958](#)) and the [German Society of Spine Surgery](#) (founded in 1987). The founding congress of the [DWG](#) took place in [Munich](#) in 2006, with 747 participants. The number of members is 1250, making it the largest spine society in [Europe](#).

Hospitals

see [Germany Hospitals](#).

Neurosurgical Training in Germany

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¹⁾

Steudel WI, Collmann H, Reulen HJ. Development of German Neurosurgical Health Care from 1945 to 1955. J Neurol Surg A Cent Eur Neurosurg. 2025 Mar;86(S 01):S9-S14. doi: 10.1055/a-2558-3285. Epub 2025 May 21. PMID: 40398430.

²⁾

Buchfelder M. From trephination to tailored resection: neurosurgery in Germany before World War II. Neurosurgery. 2005 Mar;56(3):605-13; discussion 605-13. doi: 10.1227/01.neu.0000155336.06394.7f. PMID: 15730586.

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