What is General Surgery?

General surgery is a discipline that requires knowledge of and familiarity with a broad spectrum of diseases that may require surgical treatment. By necessity, the breadth and depth of this knowledge will vary by disease category. In most areas, the surgeon will be expected to be competent in diagnosing and treating the full spectrum of disease. However, there are some types of disease in which comprehensive knowledge and experience is not generally gained in the course of a standard surgical residency. In these areas, the surgeon will be able to recognize and treat a select group of conditions within a disease category. Residency training in general surgery requires experience in all of the following content areas:

- Alimentary Tract (including Bariatric Surgery)
- Abdomen and its Contents
- Breast, Skin and Soft Tissue
- Endocrine System
- Solid Organ Transplantation
- Pediatric Surgery
- Surgical Critical Care
- Surgical Oncology (including Head and Neck Surgery)
- Trauma/Burns and Emergency Surgery
- Vascular Surgery

General surgery as a field comprises, but is not limited to, the performance of operations and procedures (including endoscopies) relevant to the content areas listed above. Additional expected knowledge and experience in the above areas includes technical proficiency in the performance of essential operations/procedures in the above areas, plus knowledge, familiarity and in some cases technical proficiency with more uncommon and complex operations in each of the above areas. Clinical knowledge, including epidemiology, anatomy, physiology, clinical presentation, and pathology (including neoplasia). Knowledge of wound healing; infection; fluid management; shock and resuscitation; immunology; antibiotic usage; metabolism; management of postoperative pain; and use of enteral and parenteral nutrition. Experience and skill in the following areas: clinical evaluation and management, or stabilization and referral, of patients with surgical diseases; management of preoperative, operative and postoperative care; management of comorbidities and complications; and knowledge of appropriate use and interpretation of radiologic and other diagnostic imaging.

The following disciplines have training programs related to, but separate from, general surgery. As the primary surgical practitioner in many circumstances, the certified general surgeon is required to be familiar with diseases and operative techniques in these areas. The certified general surgeon will have experience during training that will allow for diagnosis and management of a select group of conditions in these areas. However, comprehensive knowledge and management of conditions in these areas generally requires additional training.

- Bariatric Surgery
- Solid Organ Transplantation
• Pediatric Surgery
• Thoracic Surgery
• Vascular Surgery

In addition, the certified general surgeon is expected to be able to recognize and provide early management and appropriate referral for urgent and emergent problems in the surgical fields of:
• Gynecology
• Urology
• Orthopaedic Injuries
• Surgery
• Hand
What is General Surgery?

"General Surgery" is a discipline of surgery having a central core of knowledge embracing anatomy, physiology, metabolism, immunology, nutrition, pathology, wound healing, shock and resuscitation, intensive care, and neoplasia, which are common to all surgical specialties.

A general surgeon has specialized knowledge and experience related to the diagnosis, preoperative, operative, and postoperative management, including the management of complications, in nine primary components of surgery, all of which are essential to the education of a broadly based surgeon:

1. Alimentary tract
2. Abdomen and its contents
3. Breast, skin, and soft tissue
4. Head and neck, including trauma, vascular, endocrine, congenital and oncologic disorders -- particularly tumors of the skin, salivary glands, thyroid, parathyroid, and the oral cavity.
5. Vascular system, excluding the intracranial vessels and heart.
6. Endocrine system, including thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal and endocrine pancreas.
7. Surgical oncology, including coordinated multimodality management of the cancer patient by screening, surveillance, surgical adjunctive therapy, rehabilitation, and follow-up.
8. Comprehensive management of trauma, including musculoskeletal, hand, and head injuries. The responsibility for all phases of care of the injured patient is an essential component of general surgery.
9. Complete care of critically ill patients with underlying surgical conditions, in the emergency room, intensive care unit and trauma/burn units.

The program must consist of at least five years, of which

- Not more than 12 months may be devoted to education in a single surgical discipline other than the principal components of surgery;
- Not more than six months in total may be allocated to nonsurgical clinical disciplines such as internal medicine, pediatrics, gastroenterology, anesthesiology, or surgical pathology;
- At least 54 months (4.5 years) must be clinical surgery, with experience in endoscopy, surgical intensive care, and emergency care included under this category; and
- Three of the clinical surgery years must be concerned with the principal components of general surgery.