

Theresa Gillis MD FAAPMR

Tell members a little bit about yourself.

Your Practice

I'm Chief of the Rehabilitation Service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and lead a faculty of eight other physicians and medical director for our inpatient and outpatient therapy programs, approximately 100 therapists across our Manhattan and regional clinical sites. My clinical practice is in Manhattan as well as our location in Bergen County, northern NJ. In my clinics patients have a wide range of cancer-associated and treatment-associated impairments, across the full continuum, from newly diagnosed to palliative or survivorship stages of care.

Your Life Outside of Work

Outside of work, I've been busy with two sons and a daughter, now all (nearly) fully launched adults. Now that my husband and I are empty nesters, we are traveling much more. Montclair, NJ is a wonderful place to live.

What accomplishments/honors are you particularly proud of that you would like to share with members?

I'm very proud of the impact I've had on many residents and fellows who've been interested in caring for people with cancer. Some have been inspired to pursue this subspecialty themselves, and others have gained insight into the intellectual and emotional complexities of caring for their rehabilitation needs. I'm so pleased by the continued successes of the University of Texas MD Anderson Rehabilitation program which I founded and enhanced. I'm thrilled by the growth and transformation of the Memorial Sloan Kettering program from an outpatient musculoskeletal focus to incorporate rehabilitation care in the acute setting, both consultation and treatment in-place. I'm also very proud of my recent Distinguished Member award, a truly delightful surprise.

What have you advanced in your local community outside of or in conjunction with your medical practice?

My work at MSK has focused on bringing rehabilitation to the patient- embedding our physicians in each of the places the MSK patient is already receiving care. I've also created and supported collaborative multispecialty clinics such as Bone Metastasis, Heme Transplant and Graft-vs Host Disease clinics. Simplifying access to multiple specialists leads to less time/financial toxicity for patients but also better communication and patient care.

What special skills or unique attributes do you bring to the Board of Governors?

I have a unique experience of caring solely for patients in cancer care throughout my career. I also have worked in academic and community hospital settings, within academic departments as well as essentially solo practice within a hospital cancer program, so have multiple perspectives. I also experienced the challenge of being a busy mother in a dual career home, with the limitations this can impose professionally; this is not unique but is an important reality for many of our members.

What is a current or future challenge to the Academy or the specialty that you look forward to addressing as a Board Member?

Two challenges are top of mind at the moment: how can the Academy support members to reduce the drivers of burnout. Particularly the difficulty of navigating insurance industry behaviors that are essentially dictating the practice of medicine, the burdens of documentation, the continual press of productivity measures etc. The second challenge is tied to this: despite all we face, we are a very resilient, empathetic and humanistic bunch and our work is so very rewarding! We need to make sure our trainees and early career colleagues can be successful in in-patient care as well as outpatient settings.

What have we not asked you that you think members should know about you?

In recent years my husband and I have been learning French and also learning to scull (rowing with two oars). Not yet proficient in either but I'm happy we are trying out new things.