

AAPM&R's Advocacy Priorities

As the primary medical society for PM&R, AAPM&R is the organization that advocates on behalf of PM&R physicians and their patients. We are continuing to position PM&R physicians as essential leaders early and across the healthcare continuum. We are defending against threats to PM&R practices.

In 2023 we are focused on:

1. Fighting to Reduce Psychiatrist Burden by Removing Prior Authorization Struggles

- » AAPM&R's efforts aim to reduce the burden of your daily work by exposing the flaws of the "peer-to-peer" system and decreasing lengthy response times from plans, while protecting the aspects of your career that you enjoy.
- » We continue to push CMS on regulatory reforms to reduce the burdens imposed by unnecessary prior authorization requirements through both individual Academy and coalition comments as well as Capitol Hill visits.
- » We also partner with numerous coalitions to amplify our impact:
 - We are members of the Regulatory Relief Coalition (RRC), a group of national physician specialty organizations advocating for regulatory burden reduction in Medicare.
 - We also participate in other coalitions interested in reforming prior authorization processes, including the Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation (CPR).

2. Fighting Against PM&R Physician Fee Cuts and For Improved PM&R Physician Payment

- » AAPM&R remains committed to pursuing fair reimbursement for physician-led care in the ever-changing healthcare environment. Medicare physician payment reform was a top priority during Congressional meetings for HP&L's Hill Day this spring, where we advocated for high-quality, high-value care and sustainable positive annual updates to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule in meetings with more than 20 Congressional offices.
- » In response to the shift toward a value-based payment system, we published AAPM&R's Principles for Alternative Payment Models. The principles help guide essential advocacy and knowledge building for our members and is a tool to demonstrate how PM&R can successfully contribute to value-based care initiatives when addressing stakeholders such as payers, hospital administrators and lawmakers. Learn more at aapmr.org/advocacy/position-statements.

3. Defending the Role of Psychiatrists Against Encroachment from Non-PM&R Physicians and Non-Physicians

- » For years, AAPM&R has been fighting national and local scope of practice expansion battles to protect and preserve the leadership role of psychiatrists on the healthcare team. As the specialty society for PM&R, we believe that PM&R physicians are the most qualified to lead the team of medical specialists, therapists and practitioners involved in a patient's rehabilitative care. Your Academy is actively lobbying against federal and state scope of practice expansions by organizing grassroots advocacy campaigns. Academy members have sent more than 500 letters to their representatives this year, taking a united stand for high-quality patient care.
- » In late 2022, the Academy learned that the National Basketball Association (NBA) made updates to their Team Health and Performance Personnel policy, which placed unique and unwarranted restrictions on psychiatrists' capacities to serve as sports medicine team physicians in the NBA. AAPM&R contacted the NBA quickly and has hosted town halls with members to understand what they are experiencing. AAPM&R is in the process of creating a workgroup with a goal of increasing the understanding and value of what we do in sports medicine and positioning PM&R as leaders in sports medicine. They will work closely with our Specialty Brand Expansion Committee, who is tackling awareness of the specialty and promoting the value of PM&R among key stakeholders.

4. Working to Preserve Psychiatrists' Expertise in Determining Medical Necessity in Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility (IRF) Admissions

- » The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is conducting a new nationwide audit of 2022 claims. With the support of dedicated PM&R member volunteers, AAPM&R is partnering with the American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association and the Federation of American Hospitals to provide feedback on the audit while the OIG conducts its work. While the OIG is bound to remain independent in conducting this audit, it has agreed to accept data and substantive input from our organizations, throughout the course of the audit itself. The goal of this innovative project is to help identify any specific areas that might require clarification in the regulations and make meaningful recommendations to decrease the IRF admissions error rate and have a positive impact on the Medicare IRF benefit. The OIG will conduct this nationwide IRF audit throughout 2023, with a final report expected in 2024.

5. Advocating for Expanded Telehealth Innovations and Enhanced Ways for Psychiatrists to Advance Patient Care

- » AAPM&R supports the coverage of telehealth services and encourages members to utilize telehealth as an expansion of their practice. In 2022, we advocated for Congressional action on establishing a pathway to permanent, comprehensive telehealth reform. We joined other organizations to advocate for keeping telehealth waivers in place through the end of 2024, and our advocacy efforts were a success! This two-year extension was signed into law in 2022.
- » We have published a white paper addressing telehealth innovations in psychiatry and a range of practical telehealth educational resources for members. Now that the public health emergency has ended, we will continue advancing advocacy strategies in telehealth to support payment parity, continued coverage, waiver expansions and interstate licensure agreements. Learn more at aapmr.org/telehealth.

6. Advancing Long COVID Advocacy to Position PM&R Physicians as Leaders in Multi-Disciplinary Care

- » In March 2021, the Academy released our official Long COVID call to action, where we called on President Biden and Congress to gear up for the next coronavirus crisis, by preparing and implementing a comprehensive national plan focused on the needs of millions of individuals suffering from the long-term symptoms of COVID-19. Throughout 2021, we created our Multi-Disciplinary PASC Collaborative of experts who developed clinical guidance to improve quality-of-care as well as formal education and resources to improve experience-of-care and health equity.
- » In March 2022, the White House answered our call to action and released a National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan, which included components directly from our 2021 call to action.
- » We are currently advocating for federal legislation to provide more resources for the fight against Long COVID. These initiatives include the *CARE for Long COVID Act*, from Senator Tim Kaine, and the *Long COVID RECOVERY NOW Act*, introduced by Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester. AAPM&R worked with these Congressional offices to develop the legislative initiatives and aided in developing the final language. Learn more at aapmr.org/covid.

7. Preparing Psychiatrists to Navigate Through the End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

- » The public health emergency ended on May 11, 2023. In early May, we provided members with an online resource containing the most up-to-date information on which COVID-19 flexibilities were scheduled to end, which waivers were scheduled to be extended on a temporary basis, and which became permanent. Learn more at aapmr.org/phe.

We need members like you to join our advocacy efforts. Learn more and get involved at aapmr.org/advocacy. Please contact healthpolicy@aapmr.org if you have any questions. For more updates on our advocacy priorities, see our monthly Advocacy in Action feature in this issue and every issue of *The Psychiatrist*.