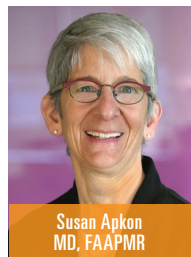


Imagining a BOLD Future for Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine

Together, the specialty of PM&R BOLDLY discussed its future. AAPM&R enlisted the assistance of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM) physiatrists to envision the future of PRM aligned with the vision for physiatry.

That vision states that in the future...we see the pediatric physiatrist recognized as the essential physician expert for children and youth with acquired and congenital disabilities with the main purpose to optimize function and life transitions across the care continuum and into the community.

- Pediatric physiatrists champion the transdisciplinary approach, providing evidence-based and goal-directed care across all environments focused on quality-of-life and optimizing function.
- PRM involvement early in care establishes family and care team relationships, which leads to the best care plan spanning prehabilitation through adulthood.
- PRM physicians extend beyond the medical system to partner with education, social, and community services.



We recently spoke with **Susan Apkon, MD, FAAPMR**, a leader in the field of Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine (PRM), who shared some insights on how her practice and experience aligns with the envisioned future

for PRM and how the Academy is advocating for and leading the effort to improve family-centered care in value-based medicine.

In January 2019, Dr. Apkon transitioned from Seattle Children's Hospital to Children's Hospital Colorado to accept the position as Chair of Pediatric Rehabilitation. "It's been a fantastic new role for me. In my new position, I'm having an opportunity to look more broadly at the role that we (physiatrists) play within the hospital as well as in the community," said Dr. Apkon.

Colorado does not have many long-term care programs for children—something Dr. Apkon and Children's Colorado is working hard to understand. "Many children are staying in our hospital for long periods of time—either in the acute setting or rehab unit—or going home to family who are oftentimes ill-prepared to take on the 24/7 care that's needed. There are limited resources in the community to help support these families. Our hospital is developing a

strategy to address this need and developing a post-acute care plan that will help provide care for those children and adolescences with complex medical needs including those with disabilities," said Dr. Apkon.

And what better people to lead this effort, than physiatrists. "As rehabilitation physicians, one of our roles is helping to transition kids from the hospital back into the home and community setting, and I think we're in a great position to really lead that charge. We understand functional impairment. We understand the needs of a family, in terms of how they need to set up their home and what equipment and services they may need to help support them," stated Dr. Apkon.

In fact, this is a key tenet of physiatry's care philosophy—restoring function and quality-of-life to patients with disabilities. "It's our obligation, our responsibility to follow these children and their families long-term and provide them the supportive services that they need to maximize their function," said Dr. Apkon.

But there is still much work to do, especially in settings where physiatric care isn't fully understood or valued, and that's where the work of AAPM&R's Advancing PM&R BOLD and physiatric leaders comes into play, as Dr. Apkon affirmed, especially being involved early in the patient's treatment plan.

"We as physiatrists really have to step up to the table. We have to insert ourselves—at the hospital level, at the university level, within larger health care systems, and with the insurance industry nationally—to be strong advocates for PM&R and the patients we serve."

And that means being involved early in the patient's treatment plan. "You have to think about it across the care continuum. We need to initiate care for children with disabilities at the time of diagnosis, understand the impact the condition will have over the course of their life on function, and develop treatment plans to maximize their function while minimizing commodities," said Dr. Apkon.

She goes on to say, "That's why the Advancing PM&R BOLD initiative is exciting for me for a number of different reasons. One, I think that the Academy has identified some core areas to focus on; really important ones. As a pediatric rehab physician, I'm excited that pediatric rehabilitation is a focus for the BOLD initiative. But I think that for the entire specialty, the focus on positive outcomes is important as it is so core to who we are."

"As we think about value-based medicine and health care, and the direction we need to go and are going; outcomes are so critical. Having the voice of the Academy and the members behind it will help to get this message out. As a small and sometimes quirky field (my words) we have always focused on maximizing function; other specialties haven't historically had this focus, but fortunately they are now. It's imperative for us as a large organization with a critical mass—the voice of all of us to speak to that—to lead this charge by providing value to our patients and their families."

This is Your Future

Advancing PM&R BOLD continues to make great strides in advancing the vision for the specialty and is forward-focused to engage our membership to bring all 4 envisioned futures to fruition, including Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine through the hard work and guidance of thought-leaders like Dr. Susan Apkon. Our future is a happy, optimistic one according to Dr. Apkon.

"As I think about the future of our field, I'm very optimistic. I've seen some incredible changes. I think as a whole, health care and our colleagues across all the different specialties within medicine agree that outcomes are really where we need to focus. I think having a strong advocate in AAPM&R and taking ownership is critical to that success. I really want us to be leading that effort, and with the support of the Academy and we'll be able to do that."

To learn more about Advancing PM&R BOLD, additional practice areas, and how you can get involved, visit www.bold.aapmr.org. ❖

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