

Michael R. Yochelson, MD, MBA, FAAPMR, FAAN

Tell members a little bit about yourself.

Your Practice

As a physiatrist and neurologist, I have spent my career focused on brain injury rehabilitation. In my earlier career, I primarily treated patients with moderate to severe brain injury. As I moved into more administrative roles and from inpatient to outpatient, my focus changed to mild TBI/concussion.

Your Life Outside of Work

When not working, I enjoy spending time with my family, dogs, cooking and traveling. I am a foodie and love to try new restaurants wherever I go.

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

I am proud to have started the first fellowship at MedStar National Rehabilitation in Brain Injury Medicine in 2008 and subsequently one of the first accredited brain injury medicine fellowships in the country. During my tenure at MedStar NRH, we increased the number of PM&R residents in our program and added 4 additional fellowships. After my transition to Shepherd Center, we started a fellowship in brain injury medicine and, most recently, one in SCI medicine.

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

I have always been active in the community. In Atlanta, I am an active member of my local Rotary club. I have completed Leadership Atlanta. And I now serve on the board of Chastain Horse Park, an organization that provides therapy and therapeutic riding programs. I have served on the Georgia Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission for 4 years (appointed by the Governor).

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

I am a good listener, a clear communicator and a diplomatic leader. I am able to synthesize the comments and ideas of many and help bring focus to a group during meetings. I am organized. As demonstrated throughout my career, I am passionate about education - not just educating residents and fellows, but educating other staff, clinicians, patients, family and other stakeholders.

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

I think that one of our greatest challenges is burn out. And the cause of this is multifactorial - payer issues, requiring so much more paperwork and administrative work than ever before; staffing shortages requiring everyone to work harder (but not necessarily smarter); documentation burdens; productivity requirements, etc. As AAPM&R is the academy FOR physiatrists, I think we have the responsibility to address burn out or we will lose exceptional clinicians and leaders in the field and we will turn off potential stars to pursue the field.

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

I am passionate about DEIA. I started attending educational meetings about this before it was in vogue. I believe that when we consider DEIA, we often forget persons with disability and, given our profession, we should always keep that segment of our population in the forefront of our minds.