

innovators & influencers™ honorees

aapm&r

We want to feature the amazing work of our early- and mid-career members and the impact they are making in the field of PM&R. The new Innovators and Influencers Honoree Program seeks to do just that!

We're honoring AAPM&R members, PGY3 through 15 years post residency, who have accomplished something innovative or influential within the specialty of PM&R or to the PM&R patient population.

Categories include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Clinical Innovation
- ✓ Practice Innovation
- ✓ Specialty Advocacy
- ✓ Patient Advocacy
- ✓ National Education
- ✓ National Service
- ✓ Specialty Awareness/Expansion
- ✓ Mentorship
- ✓ Community Programming/Involvement
- ✓ Patient Education

In our inaugural year, we are honoring 21 physiatrists who were selected by the Innovators & Influencers Honorees Application Review Workgroup and approved by the Inclusion & Engagement Committee.

Congratulations to our 2024 Honorees!



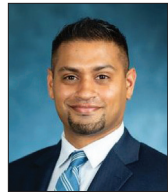
Ugochi K. Azuike, DO, FAAPMR
Sugarland Interventional Orthopedics and
Regenerative Medicine
Owner and Attending Physician

Dr. Azuike is recognized for her commitment in the field of interventional orthopedics and regenerative medicine. She educates peers and patients regarding regenerative procedures that could prevent unnecessary surgical procedures, providing patients with less time off from work, decreased recovery time and decrease in several complications. In her role at the Interventional Orthopedics Foundation, she acts as an instructor to raise awareness of the specialty and to instruct physicians on providing ultrasound and fluoroscopic regenerative injections. Dr. Azuike continues to contribute to the field of PM&R through her research publications on regenerative medicine.



Jessica Tse Cheng, MD, FAAPMR
City of Hope Orange County Lennar
Foundation Cancer Center
Assistant Clinical Professor

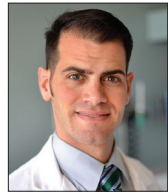
Dr. Cheng is an assistant clinical professor at City of Hope Orange County Lennar Foundation Cancer Center in California. As a proponent of the importance of cancer rehabilitation, Dr. Cheng conducts research, lectures and community outreach to disseminate valuable information about the role of rehabilitation in enhancing the quality-of-life of cancer survivors. Her advocacy is geared not only toward healthcare professionals but continues to empower patients to actively engage in their recovery journey. Dr. Cheng is currently in the process of building a cancer rehabilitation interdisciplinary clinic at City of Hope to increase understanding of the sub-specialty, improving access to care and patient outcomes. She also works to inspire residents and medical students on a national level to consider a career in cancer rehabilitation.



Tahsin Choudhury, DO
University of Michigan Health System PM&R Program

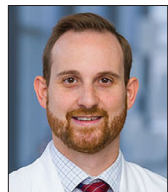
Incoming Spinal Cord Injury Fellow, 2024-2025

Dr. Choudhury is a current PGY4 resident at the University of Michigan Health System PM&R Program and will be starting his fellowship in Spinal Cord Injury later this year. Dr. Choudhury works to advocate for the specialty and its impact on improving the lives of patients. For example, he has volunteered at the wheelchair games in Oregon and successfully advocated for Cancer Rehabilitation funding in Richmond, Virginia. He is also the creator and current host of the AOCPMR podcast helping to broaden the message of PM&R.



Craig C. DiTommaso, MD, FAAPMR
US Physiatry – Chief Clinical Officer
PAM Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Humble – Medical Director

Dr. DiTommaso is a strong advocate for individuals with disorders of consciousness (DOC) and he started a DOC rehabilitation program in his community at a stand-alone rehabilitation hospital. Dr. DiTommaso is known for his social media engagement on X and Instagram to spread awareness of the DOC population. He has led both regionally and nationally to implement Best Practice Guidelines for persons with severe brain injury and DOC, and continues to provide lectures and didactics at multiple meetings throughout the year.



Michael A. Fediw, MD, FAAPMR
University of Texas Southwestern
Assistant Professor

Dr. Fediw is a physiatrist who has become an influential leader within the AAPM&R Cancer Rehabilitation Member Community. In his role on the Cancer Rehabilitation Sub-Committee, Dr. Fediw designed, implemented and co-chairs the Cancer Rehabilitation Tumor Board. Creating this Tumor Board allows physiatrists to gain valuable feedback on challenging cases. This board is not limited to practicing physiatrists but allows for those in a cancer rehabilitation fellowship to join the reviews to expand their knowledge and network within the community. The reviews have garnered the attention and engagement of medical students and residents, and Dr. Fediw hopes that they can continue to expand cancer rehabilitation care, education and exposure through the Tumor Board.



Mark T. Fisher, MD, FAAPMR
Children's Mercy Hospital
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

Dr. Fisher is recognized for his advocacy and expertise in adaptive sports, recreation and inclusion of youth with physical and cognitive impairments. He is currently an international-level classifier and was appointed as Head of Classification for the International Federation of Sport Climbing, with responsibility for directing, coordinating and implementing classification for competition and assisting in submission of a bid for the sport of Paraclimbing to participate in the 2028 Paralympic Games. He currently serves on the USA Climbing Medical Committee and continues to lead several initiatives in advancing the sport of Paraclimbing. Outside of his Paralympic and Olympic efforts, Dr. Fisher works to provide medical guidance and program assistance to one regional and eight local non-profit agencies focusing on physical activity and recreation for youth with disabilities.



Jason J. Gruss, MD, FAAPMR
ARC Rehabilitation
Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Gruss has provided clinical guidance for the Transitions of Life Care model of transitioning patients across the care continuum with PM&R as the focus. He is training ARC physicians nationally and seeks

to ensure that all patients are "at the appropriate place, at the appropriate time, for an appropriate duration," receiving services best coordinated through PM&R specialists. Dr. Gruss also began one of the first COVID SAR units, and worked to educate his peers throughout the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic through publications and webinars focused on the many challenges PM&R faced in skilled nursing facilities.



Ekta Gupta, MD, FAAPMR
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center
Assistant Professor

Dr. Ekta Gupta works to advocate for and dedicate herself to the sub-specialty of cancer rehabilitation. She is actively involved in the Falls Advisory Committee, Clinical Effectiveness Subcommittee, Faculty

Senate and Medical Records Committee at UT MD Anderson ensuring her voice and her PM&R expertise is valued at her institution. Dr. Gupta is also a prominent member of the AAPM&R Cancer Rehabilitation Member Community (formerly Cancer Rehabilitation Physician Consortium) and had held various leadership roles (co-secretary, vice-chair and chair) and has acted as a mentor to medical students, residents and fellows, continually inspiring others with her passion for Cancer Rehabilitation.



Victoria L. Heasley, MD, FAAPMR
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
Assistant Professor of Clinical Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, and Biomedical Engineering

Dr. Heasley collaborated with others in the adaptive sports community and founded the non-profit The Bridge Adaptive Sports

& Recreation. Their mission is to increase awareness and promote opportunities for individuals to participate in adaptive sports and recreation in order to improve their quality-of-life. The organization spreads awareness to the community about opportunities, empowering existing programs, facilitating the development of new programs, and increasing access to adaptive sports equipment. The non-profit has been able to support and help start an additional 16 different programs in the Cincinnati area. Through her non-profit, Dr. Heasley started an annual community event, called the SOAR expo, to promote available opportunities. Outside of the non-profit, Dr. Heasley started a multi-disciplinary Adaptive Sports Clinic and is continuing to use her background in engineering to bridge the gap between the Engineering Department and the College of Medicine to help teach the Medical Device Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program.



Stacey C. Isidro, MD
Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) – Resident Physician, Class of 2024; University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM) – Sports Medicine Fellow Physician, Class of 2025



Tracey C. Isidro, MD, FAAPMR
Columbia University Medical Center and Weill Cornell Medicine
Assistant Professor of Rehabilitation and Regenerative Medicine

Drs. Stacey and Tracey Isidro work to provide insight into being PM&R physicians subspecialized in Sports Medicine. They are

currently on Instagram and TikTok sharing about both Physiatry and Sports Medicine, and together they are working to launch a YouTube channel to create workout videos with modifications to accommodate patients with disabilities or limited mobility. Their content focuses on physician wellness, mentorship and research within PM&R and advocating to improve access for underserved communities and demonstrating the importance of physiatrists in healthcare.



Ravi E. Kasi, MD, FAAPMR
Rush University Medical Center PM&R Program
Residency Program Director; Associate Professor

Dr. Kasi has led many efforts in educating and mentoring medical students. Dr. Kasi meets with his many mentees from across

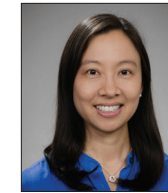
the country to teach them about PM&R, helps conduct mock interviews and polishes their CVs. He also invites guest speakers as well to help educate the medical students. Although he started his mentoring prior to his program director role, Dr. Kasi continues to use his free time to guide medical students and remains committed to helping grow the specialty and igniting a passion for PM&R.



Sheng Li, MD, PhD, FAAPMR
University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston PM&R Program – Professor; TIRR Memorial Hermann Research Center – Director of Neurorehabilitation Research Laboratory

Dr. Li is an expert in the field of TBI and Stroke Rehabilitation, and has a strong interest in

spasticity evaluation and management. He has developed new techniques for managing spasticity (BreEstim) along with continuing to research new interventions to provide care to patients and training to residents and fellows in the field. Outside of his research, Dr. Li continues to mentor others on how to advance the care of patients suffering from these types of conditions.



Cindy Lin, MD, FAAPMR
University of Washington Medical Center
Clinical Associate Professor, Sports and Spine Medicine, Endowed Professorship in Sports and Exercise Medicine
The Sports Institute – Director of Clinical Innovation

Dr. Lin is an advocate for Exercise is Medicine®

and leads the ExerciseRx project. ExerciseRx supports patients and providers by incorporating a physical activity vital sign into the electronic health record – this is then used to prescribe step counts and home exercises. Throughout the project, they are developing digital health tools for physical activity promotion across multiple patient populations. Dr. Lin continues to advocate for patient education and the comprehensive benefits of exercise at the national level.



Sara Parke, MD, FAAPMR
Mayo Clinic Arizona – Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation; Tucson Medical Center – Cancer Rehabilitation Physician

Dr. Parke is recognized for her advocacy in Cancer Rehabilitation and influencing the creation of a full faculty cancer rehabilitation

position at her residency program. She worked to develop a second location for a Cancer Rehabilitation program in Arizona and continues to mentor students at all levels of training and in all specialties and subspecialties. Through her efforts, Dr. Parke hopes to provide the necessary Cancer Rehabilitation services to a more diverse, lower socioeconomic and rural population. She continues to contribute to the specialty by publishing several scientific articles, participating in patient advocacy efforts and continuing to speak at other events to bring awareness to PM&R and Cancer Rehabilitation.



Austin Scott, MD
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Pediatric Rehabilitation Combined Resident
PGY-5

Dr. Scott is a graduating combined Pediatric Rehabilitation resident at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Over the past two years, he has developed a new adaptive

gaming program in the Cincinnati area. The program provides free monthly adaptive game evaluations to people with physical disabilities to provide them a customized controller or with buttons/switches to continue playing video games with their friends and family. Dr. Scott hopes to expand his efforts to other cities and has partnered with two non-profits, The Able Gamers Charity and the Bridge Adaptive Sports and Recreation, to make this possible. His goal is to start an adaptive gaming community to combat the social isolation that many people feel when they have a physical disability. While adaptive gaming is newer, Dr. Scott agrees that the role of a physiatrist is to help people get back to doing the things they love, and he hopes to see this market continue to grow and provide for patients across the country.



Saloni Sharma, MD, FAAPMR, LAC
 Rothman Institute, Thomas Jefferson University
 Medical Director, Orthopedic Integrative Health Center

Dr. Sharma advocates for the utilization of lifestyle medicine to reduce pain and improve well-being. In light of the pain and opioid

crisis, Dr. Sharma authored an evidence-based lifestyle and integrative medicine book for patients: *The Pain Solution: 5 Steps to Relieve and Prevent Back Pain, Muscle Pain, and Joint Pain without Medication*. She shares with readers how to create greater health and well-being with simple “microboost” steps that improve health, function, and quality-of-life. Furthermore, Dr. Sharma serves on the board of directors for the Pennsylvania Pain Society as well as Co-Chair for Pain & Spine Rehabilitation for AAPM&R. Her teaching skills have been recognized with the Dean’s Award for Excellence in Education at Sidney Kimmel Medical College. Additionally, Dr. Sharma is a popular speaker at Google on improving well-being and preventing burnout.



Mi Ran Shin, MD, MPH, FAAPMR
 George Washington University and Children’s National Hospital
 Associate Program Director for Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine Fellowship, Assistant Professor

Dr. Shin is recognized for her contributions to Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine through

advocacy work to reduce unintentional injuries among children in Washington, DC. She works with Safe Kids DC and Safe Kids Worldwide to extend beyond traditional awareness campaigns. There has been a 60% decrease in the unintentional injury rate among children 19 years and younger since the inception of the Safe Kids DC campaign. Dr. Shin continues to focus on families with children with special healthcare needs throughout the care continuum to be inclusive in injury preventive endeavors and works to secure federal grants to provide car seats and other needs in the community.



Argy Stampas, MD, MS, FAAPMR
 UTHealth at Houston McGovern Medical School/TIRR Memorial Hermann – Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Research Director

Dr. Stampas is a Spinal Cord Injury physician-researcher focused on innovation. He recognizes the need to improve bladder care in people with SCI and has been developing home

bladder neuromodulation to overcome some of the challenges that exist in bladder care. Dr. Stampas’ neuromodulation can be self-administered and can replace a portion of bladder medications. He is also studying the use of tibial nerve stimulation in the early period of SCI as a means to prevent development of morbidity due to neurogenic bladder. Dr. Stampas’ research is paving the way in this new area and has the potential to greatly improve the quality-of-life in people living with SCI.



Shannon R. Strader, DO, MS
 University of Louisville School of Medicine PM&R Program – Class of 2024; Mayo Clinic Cell Therapy Fellowship – Class of 2025
 Bella Soul – Founder and President

Dr. Strader is the first physiatrist to match into Mayo Clinic’s Cellular Therapy Fellowship.

She established the Orthobiologics and

Regenerative Medicine series in collaboration with the Alliance for Regenerative Rehabilitation Research and Training Association as a research representative for the Academic Physiatrists and Fellow Council. Outside of clinic and research, Dr. Strader is the Founder and President of Bella Soul, a non-profit that empowers college students with chronic illness or disability through scholarships and emotional support. She is an advocate for PM&R patients and strives to focus on the origins of psychiatry by focusing on those with developmental disabilities and maximizing their functional outcomes.



Amy M. West, MD, EdM, FAAPMR
 Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra-Northwell
 Assistant Professor PM&R and Orthopedics, Team Physician

Dr. West has made it her mission to educate others about PM&R and leverages her past experience as a television producer to elevate

the content she shares through social media. Most of her work overlaps with her involvement in physical fitness and exercise including acting as the current chair for the AAPM&R Exercise as Medicine Member Community. Dr. West has been a guest on many fitness podcasts where she has built awareness of PM&R. Additionally, she leads multiple national adaptive fitness events including the CrossFit Games and WheelWOD. She collaborated with Northwell’s Transgender Health Center to facilitate psychiatry evaluations for patients undergoing transition surgeries and edited the first textbook about Transgender Athlete sports medicine care. She is also currently working with The Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes’ Foundation as an ambassador to improve the mental health of healthcare workers by increasing physical activity.

Our member recognition continues year-round! Follow us on social media for more spotlights on our honorees, AAPM&R Award winners and more member highlights.

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Thank you to our first class of I&I Honorees. You’ve each made a positive impact on the specialty and the patients that you serve. Keep up the great work!

Stay tuned for the 2025 Innovators and Influencers Honoree nominations—coming this fall.