

## Positioning PM&R: Tackling Specialty Awareness

### What the Academy is Doing

Several years ago, AAPM&R launched our Specialty Brand Expansion (SBE) Committee to help plan and coordinate the Academy's initiatives to fulfill our goals related to advancing awareness, appreciation and value of the specialty with key stakeholders outside of PM&R.

As the SBE Committee, led by Andre Panagos, MD, FAAPMR, began meeting in late 2020, they developed a plan to build not just awareness of the specialty but value of the specialty among key stakeholders. Together, they identified the most important stakeholders to advancing the specialty: **healthcare CEOs/C-Suite** and **primary care providers**.

At the same time, the Academy identified the need to provide leadership through a new healthcare crisis: Long COVID/PASC. 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. We also 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.

Some of our additional Long COVID efforts include:

- AAPM&R released the first Long COVID dashboard, which showed how many millions of Americans were estimated to be experiencing Long COVID symptoms by state, county and nationally.
- 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.
- New legislation was introduced from Senator Tim Kaine, *CARE for Long COVID Act*, and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, the *TREAT Long COVID Act*, in the spring of 2022. AAPM&R significantly impacted the language used in the legislation and helped its development.

This collaborative has created **seven guidance statements** so far with an additional statement on mental health to come later in 2023. To promote these guidance statements, we hosted "reporter roundtables" with media attending to hear directly from PM&R experts, which led to many requests from reporters asking to interview physiatrists for hundreds of Long COVID news stories. These media outlets included *MedPage Today*, *Medscape*, *The Washington Post*, *ABC News*, *NBC News*, *The New York Times*, *Medical Economics*, *Axios*, *POLITICO*, *WebMD*, *CNN* and many more.

Establishing this credibility through the emerging public health crisis of Long COVID allowed us to communicate more about the value of PM&R early and throughout the continuum of healthcare. **And these connections are now allowing us to expand the understanding of PM&R and its value with key stakeholders through the media.**

### Explore Our Long COVID Guidance Statements:

- Fatigue
- Breathing Discomfort
- Cognitive Symptoms
- Cardiovascular Complications
- Pediatrics
- Autonomic Dysfunction
- Neurological Symptoms – NEW!

Learn more at [aapmr.org/guidance](http://aapmr.org/guidance).



As an example, one outlet we connected with during the Long COVID reporter roundtables is *Patient Care Online*, a digital outlet targeting primary care providers. They invited us to collaborate on monthly content where we've now featured cancer rehabilitation medicine, unique musculoskeletal and primary care models, PM&R's role in concussion and sports, pain management and more. Similarly, *Medical Economics* has invited us to bring PM&R experts into their article series later in 2023. The impact of the relationships we've built in the last two and a half years is tremendous!

### How You Can Raise Awareness of PM&R

The SBE Committee met in-person in April to discuss our progress and continue building efforts for 2023 and beyond. Part of SBE's plans moving forward will require grassroots support from you, our members! We'll be exploring opportunities to continue promoting the specialty and the value physiatrists bring to the healthcare environment. Some of these opportunities include:

- **A Speakers' Bureau** – As you've gathered from reading about our media success, we have an explosion of media interview requests for PM&R physicians. Our goal with the speakers' bureau is to create PM&R champions, raising awareness of the specialty.
- **PM&R Awareness Ambassadors** – While many requests come through AAPM&R, we recognize that members are doing outreach to increase understanding of the specialty in their communities. This program will recognize AAPM&R members who have positioned PM&R through media, presentations to their communities, health systems or other specialties.
- **Innovators and Influencers Honorees** – This program will recognize the accomplishments of AAPM&R early- and mid-career members.
- **PM&R Awareness and Value Award** – Recognizes individuals whose efforts have significantly elevated the understanding and value of physiatry across healthcare. *Nominations for 2023 awards in this category closed May 31, but stay tuned to nominate in 2024!*

While we tackle awareness through a coordinated media effort and the above recognition and engagement opportunities, progress will also require that we all work in our own practices, communities and systems as well. **We've developed a new toolkit to help make this easier for you.** Our Positioning PM&R toolkit helps members position themselves for success now and in the future. This exciting new resource includes key messages, talking points, references, discussions about audiences and more – within the areas of musculoskeletal care, the rehabilitation care continuum, cancer rehabilitation medicine, pain management and spine rehabilitation, and pediatric rehabilitation medicine. We also feature communications tips to help you communicate most effectively by knowing your audience, sticking to your key messages and communicating clearly and directly.

We also recently held a complimentary webinar with Drs. Andre Panagos, Monica Verduzco-Gutierrez, and Jonathan Whiteson as well as communications experts from Scott Circle Communications to explore more tips for promoting yourself with media and stakeholders. That recording is available to all members in our Online Learning Portal at [onlinelearning.aapmr.org](http://onlinelearning.aapmr.org).

Visit [aapmr.org/positioningpmr](http://aapmr.org/positioningpmr) to explore the Positioning PM&R toolkit and for more on our awareness efforts.



**The SBE Committee From Left to Right:** Jonathan Whiteson, MD, FAAPMR, Vice Chair; Lennox McNeary, MD, FAAPMR; Valerie Jones, MD, FAAPMR and Andre Panagos, MD, FAAPMR, Chair. Not pictured: Kevin Bernard, MD, FAAPMR; Joseph Herrera, DO, FAAPMR; Azlan Tariq, DO, FAAPMR; Farah Hussain, MD, PHIT Liaison



Positioning PM&R toolkit

