

CONSIDER A CAREER IN Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

The field of physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) is one of the best kept secrets in medicine. Practitioners of PM&R are also known as physiatrists, or rehab doctors. Physiatrists have a **unique and eclectic blend of knowledge** from the fields of orthopedics, neurology, rheumatology, exercise science, pediatrics, cardiology, pulmonology, oncology and neurosurgery.

In medical school, students are taught to evaluate, diagnose and treat disease. Physiatrists do this as well, but they also focus on how the disease and treatment has impacted their patients' daily lives. Physiatrists also focus on function, often **working with a team of providers** that includes physical, occupational and speech therapists, as well as, psychologists, social workers and vocational rehabilitation specialists. Through this **focus on day-to-day function**, the ability to walk, travel and interact with others in the community, participate in leisure activities, the goal is to improve the patients' **quality of life**.



General physiatrists treat many different conditions through the lifespan from infants to geriatrics:

- ⊙ Stroke/Neurological rehab
- ⊙ Pain syndromes
- ⊙ Sports medicine
- ⊙ Burn rehabilitation
- ⊙ Performing arts injuries
- ⊙ Traumatic brain injury
- ⊙ Musculoskeletal disorders
- ⊙ Orthopedic rehab
- ⊙ Cardiopulmonary rehab
- ⊙ Pediatric rehab
- ⊙ Spinal cord injuries
- ⊙ Neuromuscular disease
- ⊙ Prosthetics & orthotics
- ⊙ Electrodiagnostics
- ⊙ Cancer rehabilitation

PRACTICE SETTING

The physiatric generalist is still seen as a common career path, but many are focusing their practices on musculoskeletal problems, seeing patients with neck and low back pain, pain syndromes, worker's injuries, sports injuries and performing electrodiagnostics. They may act as team physician for their local high school, college or professional teams. Others have a hospital-based practice caring for patients with stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury and multiple medical problems that lead to prolonged hospitalization and deconditioning. They may also serve as medical directors for an inpatient rehabilitation unit. Academic careers can also be rewarding, combining patient care with ongoing education and cutting edge practice and research. Because of the broad range of clinical needs, the field offers tremendous professional flexibility.

SUBSPECIALIZATION

Physiatric subspecialties include:

- ④ Pain medicine
- ④ Spinal cord injury
- ④ Neuromuscular medicine
- ④ Sports medicine
- ④ Pediatric rehabilitation
- ④ Hospice and palliative care medicine

Further information regarding subspecialty certification and requirements can be found at www.abpmr.org.



LIFESTYLE

Physiatric reimbursements are generally higher than many primary care specialties, but lower than current surgical specialties. However, in this era of health care reform, the future of all medical reimbursements is unpredictable. Depending on your practice (solo, group practice, hospital employee, generalist, musculoskeletal outpatient practice or academic practice) the time spent on call is not particularly onerous. Hospitalized patients typically generate more after-hours calls than outpatients. True outpatient emergencies are the exception. PM&R is often referred to as the family friendly specialty. Jobs are available in all geographic areas of the country. Subspecialists typically gravitate to larger metropolitan areas, but can be found in smaller cities. Rural areas can support a physiatrist, especially if there is no neurologist or orthopedist available.

JOIN AAPM&R TO LEARN MORE

Representing more than 9,000 specialists in physical medicine and rehabilitation, the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) is your best source to learn more about the specialty and make the right decision in choosing PM&R as a career path before you head into residency. Resources on the Medical Student section of the AAPM&R website (www.aapmr.org) include:

- ④ Answers to medical student FAQs
- ④ A medical school road map to PM&R
- ④ A step-by-step guide to applying to a PM&R residency program

You can also broaden your knowledge of the issues important to the specialty by becoming a medical student member of AAPM&R. Medical students can join AAPM&R at no charge.

Once you become a member, you will receive online access to the Academy's monthly newsletter, *The Physiatrist*, along with the e-newsletters *AAPM&R Connection* and *Career Corner*. You also have the option to subscribe to the Academy's official scientific journal, *PM&R*, at a discounted rate to access the latest physical medicine and rehabilitation research.

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