

Nneka L. Ifejika, MD, MPH, FAAPMR

**Tell members a little bit about yourself.**

**Your practice**

I am an outpatient cerebrovascular physiatrist and a clinical researcher, currently evaluating the use of biomarkers obtained during the acute care hospitalization to predict short and long-term outcomes.

I am also the chief scientific officer of Ochsner Health System, providing oversight to four translational research labs, 625 clinical studies in 30 medical specialties, of which 100 are investigator-initiated, the Ochsner Biorepository, Center for Outcomes Research, BioDesign Lab, Central Regulatory Team and research education/onboarding for medical students, residents, fellows and faculty at the largest health system in Louisiana.

**Your life outside of work**

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my extended family and friends, gardening and travel. I am also into sustainable interior design – we are in the process of renovating a 160-year-old house, which speaks to my inner antique, resale and consignment shop enthusiast.

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

I am most appreciative of my team, the Stroke Outcomes and Continuum of Care Research (SOCCR) Lab. My lab consists of medical students, physiatry residents and junior faculty, all of whom inspire me and keep me on my toes. I'm also thankful to be included on teams who consistently improve the lives of patients with cerebrovascular disease. My life changed when I joined the UTHealth Stroke Team in Houston, and without the support of my friends and colleagues in Dallas at UT Southwestern (where I remain an Adjunct Professor of PM&R), I wouldn't have this unique opportunity to expand our research footprint at Ochsner.

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

An important component of being a good clinician-researcher is the ability to connect, establish trust and an understanding that our team is engaged and after the best interests of our patients, their families and the community at large. Outreach is a critical component of paying it forward. In 2021, we published a paper in JMIR detailing the results of two large-scale events – during which our team completed 2,774 health screenings over 12 hours, averaging four health screenings per minute. Twenty multimedia placements using the Stomp out Stroke webpage, social media, #stompoutstroke, television, iQ radio and web-based news reached approximately 850,000 people in the Houston area.

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

As a former chair of the Health Policy and Legislation Committee, I've worked with the Board of Governors on issues that are pertinent to the AAPM&R membership including telehealth, reimbursement, scope of practice, administrative burden and regulatory relief. Advocacy for what is important to our *members* remains at the forefront of my service to the Board.

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

Protecting our field from overlap from specialties juxtaposed to physiatry is an active challenge. We have such a diverse and robust skill set, which has its pros and cons. It is imperative that we unite under the broad umbrella of PM&R. This is our home. We must look after it.