

Advancing Physiatric-led Team Care Through Collaboration and Community

The Position of AAPM&R

Today's changing health care landscape is shifting to align to the team-focused model as providers strive to achieve the quadruple aim of enhancing patient experience, improving population health, reducing costs, and improving the work life of clinicians and staff.¹ Across settings, multi-disciplinary, team-based care is at the core of physiatric practice, and there is an opportunity for physiatry to position itself within medicine as exemplary of the team-based care model. To pursue this opportunity and strengthen physiatry's overall impact on patient care, AAPM&R supports the inclusion of Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) under the supervision of a PM&R physician.

Physiatrists are indispensable leaders in directing rehabilitation and recovery, and in preventing injury and disease. Increasingly, the physiatry care team includes APPs who are non-physicians, including Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and Physician Assistants (PAs). According to the recent PM&R Compensation Survey, 70% of AAPM&R members currently work with APPs in practice.² Physiatrists and APPs have skills, knowledge, and abilities that are not equivalent, but instead are complementary. Per AAPM&R's position, APPs should not practice independently, but instead work under the supervision of a PM&R physician within a rehabilitation team. As rehabilitation team leaders, no one is better positioned than physiatrists to train and focus the efforts of team members to maximize value.

The incorporation of APPs in the rehabilitation team is intended to support physiatrists in assuming medical leadership duties suited to their level of expertise, consistently providing more complex patient care, and enhancing the reach of PM&R care overall. New health care delivery models provide exciting opportunities for physiatrists, although workforce limitations are challenging. APPs offer the necessary support to physiatrists in order to advance innovative models of care and further the impact of physiatry across medicine. APPs can have a measurable impact on clinical productivity.³ In addition to improving efficiencies, they can also positively impact patient and physician satisfaction

by providing continuity of care, assisting with patient education, documentation, and other follow-up care.⁴ The involvement of the APP in initial assessment and implementation of treatment depends on the complexity and acuity of the patients' condition, which should be determined by the physiatrist.

To support the efforts of the rehabilitation care team, AAPM&R is committed to developing educational resources for both physiatrists and APPs regarding how APPs can be effectively integrated into the physiatrist-led rehabilitation team. The Academy is opposed to training or advocating for APPs to practice independently of physiatrists. Rather, it is AAPM&R's intention to provide training for APPs to bolster their skills and strengthen the core function of the rehabilitation team as a whole. To further support this team approach, the Academy offers membership for APPs. It is expected that these steps will result in APPs that are committed to physiatry over the long term, making the investment in training and membership worthwhile. In order to attract and retain the best possible care team members, physiatry must welcome and work collaboratively with APPs with mutual acknowledgement of, and respect for each other's contributions to patient care.

It is the position of AAPM&R that:

- Physiatry-led, patient-centered, team-based care is the best approach to providing optimized rehabilitation care for patients.
- The physiatrist's specialized, multidisciplinary training makes the PM&R physician the most qualified specialist to lead the team of medical specialists, therapists, and practitioners involved in a patient's rehabilitative care.
- In order to strengthen physiatry's overall impact and ensure patients receive appropriate care from the most qualified providers, the Academy is committed to welcoming APPs as AAPM&R members and providing educational resources to support physiatrists and APPs working collaboratively.

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- APPs provide a critical pathway to maximize the workforce in physiatry and rehabilitation care and address physician burnout concerns. The Academy considers APPs to be a vital part of the caregiving team and believes that by partnering with APPs, physiatry can fulfill a broader need and value in the delivery system.
- The collaborative relationship between the physiatrist and APP should be designed to provide quality rehabilitation care and to enhance the ability of the physiatrist to consistently provide more complex patient care duties suited to his or her level of expertise.
- The Academy strives to advance the specialty of physiatry by advocating on behalf of the best interest of patients and for the common good of the practice of medicine in general. As such, the organization is prepared to assist with legislative and policy efforts to preserve high quality care and patient safety. As an organization that represents physiatry, the Academy does not advocate on behalf of APPs for any position that would compromise our physiatrist members.

Approved by the AAPM&R Board of Governors on April 25, 2019

References

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