

Atul T. Patel, MD, MHSA, FAAPMR

Member-at-Large

Tell members a little bit about yourself.

Your Practice

My current practice is a culmination of the community's needs, my interests, and opportunities. My experience over the years has been broad including being a faculty member in the department of rehabilitation medicine at KU Medical Center, residency program director, medical director of an IRF, and currently in private practice as part of an orthopedic group. I have developed a practice where I provide continuum of care and follow up for patients post neurological conditions (stroke, MS, TBI, SCI), diagnosis and rehabilitation management of patients with neuromuscular disorders (neuropathies, myopathies, ALS, CMT, etc.), electrodiagnostic studies (adult and pediatric), evaluation and treatment of patients with general rehabilitation and musculoskeletal issues, movement disorders (spasticity, cervical dystonia, limb dystonia, tremors), and patients with headaches. I also conduct clinical studies (spasticity, cervical dystonia, migraine headaches, osteoarthritis, stroke). One may ask, how can I be doing all of this? I have done it by gradually adding and training personnel to help me along the way. In addition to the infrastructure and regular staff in the office, I have two APPs and a small clinical research team.

Your Life Outside of Work

I enjoy travelling and getting to know people, learning about different cultures, trying unique foods, and discovering and experiencing places. I have been able to do this both with my family and through work. This interest is partly due to my experience growing up in Kenya and Zambia, attending school in England for a couple of years, and then coming to the U.S at the age of 18. I enjoy my family and friends and as my children are starting their careers, I am looking forward to further learning about wild animals, geography, and history. I enjoy tennis and taking walks in nature.

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

Given that I have such a broad practice, I have tried my best to stay up-to-date in several areas of medicine and am keeping current with Maintenance of Certification and subspecialty board certifications in Brain Injury Medicine, Spinal Cord Medicine, and Neuromuscular Medicine. I am also board-certified in Electrodiagnostic Medicine and recently achieved certification in Neuromuscular Ultrasound (American Board of Electrodiagnostic Medicine). I am also proud of my achievement of being the Vice President of my orthopedic group.

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

Education via lectures, seminars, and one-to-one communication on a consistent and regular basis over several years to raise the awareness of PM&R and PM&R knowledge to the following groups:

- PTs/OTs/nurses/ancillary providers
- PCPs /other physicians/APPs

I continue to provide post-acute care for neuro-rehab patients and am the only physician in my city and area who provides the full spectrum of spasticity management.

I continue to educate physiatrists and neurologists in my community that are interested in the management of spasticity and/or movement disorders.

I participate in the local stroke, MS, and SCI organizations with help from my APPs.

I have recently been elected to the Board of the Rehabilitation Institute Foundation in Kansas City. This will allow for my input in reviewing grants for various projects concerning disability. This foundation also provides financial support to Ability KC (formerly Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City).

I have worked with the local community and the Kansas City Sisters program to establish a program and secure funding for PM&R residents from the University of Guadalajara, Mexico to attend a two-week program in Kansas City with me and other medical institutions. I had the first resident attend in January 2020 and hope to resume the program once able after the pandemic.

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

With my experience of having worked in several different settings, I bring the perspective of the outpatient private practitioner but also understand the academic setting, inpatient/hospital setting, and working with both adults and children. My unique attribute is the ability to work in any setting and find a common ground to help the patients of providers in different specialties. My other attribute is my experience as a minority in different settings and my experience with various cultures (Indian ethnicity, second generation African, growing up in Kenya and Zambia, boarding school in England for two years).

What do you most look forward to in your service on the Board?

I look forward to learning more about the workings of our Academy, its goals, and vision from my colleagues on the Board, and then helping in the best possible way to include the interests of all the different groups of our diverse specialty. I will not only draw from all my experiences but keep an open mind to the views and perspectives of others.

What have we not asked you that you think members should know about you? Why am I doing this at this stage of my career?

I feel very strongly about our specialty and the need for us to have a unified organization and common voice so that we can progress together and survive the challenges of today and the future. We are a small specialty and we are stronger together and I want to play my part in whatever capacity I can to achieve this. I have felt this way before I started my residency in PM&R and have been a member of the Academy since I was a medical student. At this point in my career, I am ready to dedicate more time and effort to help with this cause and represent our field.