

Deborah A. Venesy, MD, FAAPMR President-Elect

Tell members a little bit about yourself.

Your Practice

I'm senior Staff Physician in the Center for Spine Health at The Cleveland Clinic and former Vice Chairman of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation where I have worked since 1999. My current practice is a combination of ambulatory adult spine PM&R and EMGs in conjunction with the Cleveland Clinic's Neurological Institute. I supervise medical spine interventional fellows as part of a medical interventional spine fellowship.

Prior to my appointment at The Cleveland Clinic, I was Medical Director for The Ohio State University Spine Center in Columbus, Ohio where I was an active member of the faculty. I also spent a few years in private practice. I completed my residency in PM&R at The Ohio State University with Dr. Ernie Johnson and also served as Chief Resident.

Your life outside of work

I'm a native of Northeast Ohio. My husband, Daniel Clark, and I enjoy traveling with our two children, Matt (in graduate school in Cincinnati) and Katie (college freshman) and hope to again soon! Cycling became our new hobby having ridden a few hundred miles on a variety of trails in Northeast Ohio and elsewhere since the pandemic began.

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

I've been an active volunteer throughout my professional career. I just completed a two-year term as President of The Ohio State University College of Medicine Alumni Society in October 2020. During my tenure, I really enjoyed interfacing with OSU alumni around the country and beyond and representing the interests of residency program graduates. Converting our fundraising, educational, and awards activities to virtual platforms during the pandemic was a fantastic challenge.

I've been a volunteer for our American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation since the early 90s. I am currently the President-Elect on the Board of Governors as well as a litany of other chairmanship and committee memberships including Bylaws, Quality Practice and Policy, Health Policy and Legislation, Pain/Neuromuscular Council, Medical Practice, and the President's Council of State Societies. With the American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine (AANEM), I have served on the Professional Practice Committee, Education Committee, and I am currently a member of the Quality and Patient Safety Committee. I was a member of the Admissions Committees for the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine for 10 years and Ohio State during my time in Columbus. I was named a *Cleveland Magazine* "Top Doctor" and "Forty under Forty" Award Recipient by *Columbus Monthly*.

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

One of my most impactful volunteer activities has been as an adult leader/volunteer with Appalachian Service Project (ASP) since 2012. I've had the tremendous opportunity to participate in week-long

service projects with our high school youth each summer since 2012. It is an annual church-sponsored service project providing construction services to poor individuals and families in Appalachia, and our church often served families in West Virginia and Kentucky. The ASP motto is “making homes warmer, safer and drier,” but it’s really about creating relationships and building hope. <https://asphome.org/> I’ve volunteered on seven different ASP trips, and all have been transformative! Sadly, our June 2020 mission trip was canceled due to the pandemic...but our daughter and I hope to attend this summer. I’m more than happy to share my ASP stories and pictures of our families/crews with you.

Other volunteer activities including serving as the Vice President for the Mental Health Association and a Trustee for the Goodwill Rehabilitation Board of Trustees.

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

It’s always been a unique pleasure and a real highlight of my career to have been able to participate with the other members of the Board of Governors and the national Academy staff. I’m an unabashed advocate for our field, and have really enjoyed developing a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion issues as they impact our specialty, our membership, and our patients.

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

As a specialty, we can do tremendous things. It’s been incredible to see how our practice has evolved and how we’re able to build on the foundations of PM&R and grow to bring value to patients, families, and the medical community broadly. I’m looking forward to continuing this “big tent” bold approach to bringing a variety of perspectives and viewpoints as we continue to evolve as physiatrists.

What have we not asked you that you think members should know about you?

I’m a die-hard Cleveland sports fan! We’ve had season tickets for the Cleveland Browns since we moved back to northeast Ohio. I am a huge fan of the Browns coach, Kevin Stefanski, and how he’s changed the Browns’ culture in one year. You may be hearing about his “4Hs” from me in the future. I was late to the podcast phenomenon but love listening to Brene Brown and less serious stuff, too!