

**Navigating Early-Career Decisions for Residents and New  
Graduates: Success in Physiatry Practice  
New Graduate Edition  
Saturday, March 13, 2021  
Faculty Biographies**



**Sarah K. Hwang, MD, FAAPMR**

**Session Director**

Dr. Sarah Hwang is the Director of Women's Health Rehabilitation at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. She is an Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Dr. Hwang completed her Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Residency at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab (formerly Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago). She served as Director of Women's Health Rehabilitation at University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, before joining Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in 2018. Dr. Hwang also serves as the Associate Program Director for the Northwestern PM&R residency program.

Dr. Hwang is an active member of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. She serves as a member of the Program Planning Committee and has completed the Future Leaders Program. She is a member of the Association of Academic Physiatrists and serves on the Diversity and Community Engagement Committee. She has completed the Program for Academic Leadership through the Association of Academic Physiatrists and the Early Career Women Faculty Leadership Development Seminar through the AAMC.

**David Cheng, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. David Cheng is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery at University of Southern California. He specializes in non-operative treatment of spine disorders and is board-certified in both Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Pain Medicine.

Dr. Cheng earned his medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine and completed residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital (University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell) where he was selected as chief resident. He subsequently pursued a fellowship in pain medicine at New York University. During his time in New York, Dr. Cheng also trained at Hospital for Special Surgery and Hospital for Joint Diseases. Thereafter, Dr. Cheng joined Midwest Orthopedics at Rush in Chicago where he served as a physician consultant to the Chicago Bulls and White Sox for seven years before starting at the USC Spine Center in 2020. Dr. Cheng has a special interest in medical education and research. At USC Keck School of Medicine, he serves on the Year I-II Curriculum Committee as Musculoskeletal System Chair. Outside of the hospital, Dr. Cheng holds numerous leadership roles within the North American Spine Society, Spine Intervention Society, and American Academy of Physician Medicine and Rehabilitation where he is currently the Digital Learning Committee Chair and an active member of the Medical Education Committee.



## **Brett Gerstman, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. Brett Gerstman is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Pain Medicine. He specializes in non-operative spine care. He has extensive experience treating various acute and chronic musculoskeletal, neurological and pain disorders. He is a Physician-Partner at New Jersey Spine Center in Chatham, New Jersey.

Dr. Gerstman is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School. He earned his undergraduate degree from University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He was awarded a medical degree from Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his residency in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School/Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. In his final year of residency, Dr. Gerstman served as Academic Chief Resident. Following residency training, Dr. Gerstman completed an ACGME accredited Pain Medicine Fellowship at the UCLA /WLA VA Multicampus training Program.

Dr. Gerstman has presented at numerous national conferences, authored multiple book chapters, and is well published in peer-reviewed journals such as Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Clinics of North America and PM&R.

**Nneka Ifejika, MD, MPH, FAAPMR**

Dr. Nneka Ifejika is an Associate Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at UT Southwestern Medical Center, with secondary appointments in the departments of Neurology and Population and Data Sciences. She is also the Section Chief of Stroke Rehabilitation. Dr. Ifejika earned her medical degree at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine and completed her residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Baylor College of Medicine.

Her research focuses on transitions of care after stroke, stroke outcomes, and health disparities. Her research training was chiefly with neurologist James Grotta, M.D., at the UTHealth McGovern Medical School, with whom she completed a National Institutes of Health (NIH)/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) supplement to promote diversity in health-related research. Also at McGovern, Dr. Ifejika served as Director of Neurorehabilitation and led an integrated Stroke Rehabilitation/Vascular Neurology program.

Among her many honors and accolades, Dr. Ifejika received a three-year NIH/National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences Institutional Career Development Award through the UTHealth Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences. She is a recipient of the Best Neurological Rehabilitation Research Award from the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R). She was also selected as an inaugural AAPM&R Leadership Fellow. Dr. Ifejika has received two United States Congressional commendations for her innovative work with underserved populations affected by cerebrovascular disease, and chairs the AAPM&R Health Policy and Legislation Committee.

**Keneshia McMullen Kirksey, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. Keneshia McMullen Kirksey, Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, is board certified by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. She has served as Residency Program Director for PM&R since 2014. Dr. Kirksey has been an active member of the Dean's Council for Graduate Medical Education (DCGME) since 2015 and she is also member of the DCGME Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee. Dr. Kirksey has presented nationally on the topics of “The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion” and “Women in Medicine”. In 2018, Dr. Kirksey was a recipient of the UAB Health System Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Award.

In addition, Dr. Kirksey is Medical Director of the Spinal Cord Injury program, and her primary research interests are in acute and chronic spinal cord injured patients. She has been an investigator for the UAB Spinal Cord Injury Model System for several years.

She received her medical degree from the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. Dr. Kirksey completed her residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Carolinas Rehabilitation in Charlotte, NC where she served as Chief Resident in 2007.

Dr. Kirksey is active on several committees within the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) and Association of Academic Physiatrists (AAP).

**Matthew McLaughlin, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. Matthew McLaughlin is a Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine physician and Clinical Pharmacologist. His primary research centers on optimizing “the right medication for the right patient at the right time to improve outcomes.” He completed the MD/BA 6-year program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City prior to starting his residency at the University of Missouri-Columbia. After graduation from residency, he pursued a clinical Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine fellowship at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. During this time, he obtained his Masters in Medical Bioinformatics to help with clinical research design and database management. His time is now funding through an NIH K12 award and he serves as the assistant fellowship director at Children’s Mercy – Kansas City.

He’s been interested in investing since the fourth grade, when his gifted education program played the “Stock Market Game” against other elementary schools in the area. Although he considered an MBA and obtaining a CFP designation to start working more in the personal finance field, he found he could receive the same education by listening to his favorite financial podcasts and accruing \$2.10 in library fines from financial books he occasionally forgets to return. The views expressed by Dr. McLaughlin are not to be considered personal finance advice and are solely for entertainment purposes, and trust me, with Dr. McLaughlin, it will be entertaining.

**Jacqueline Neal, MD, MSE, FAAPMR**

Dr. Jacqueline Neal is an assistant professor in the department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. She is a practicing physiatrist at the Jesse Brown VA in Chicago. Dr. Neal received her BSE and MSE degrees in biomedical engineering with a concentration in rehabilitation engineering from the University of Michigan. She also completed medical school at the University of Michigan, and residency at Northwestern-McGaw Center for Medical Education and Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, now known as the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, where she served as chief resident. She is board certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. She is an expert in critical care rehabilitation, hospital-wide patient mobility, and medical education. She was inducted into the Feinberg Academy of Medical Educators in 2018 and earned both an Outstanding Teacher Award from Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine (2017), and an Outstanding Leadership Award from the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (2017).



## **Monica Verduzco-Gutierrez, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. Monica Verduzco-Gutierrez is an accomplished academic Physiatrist and Professor and Chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the Long School of Medicine at UT Health San Antonio. She previously was the Medical Director of the Brain Injury and Stroke Program at TIRR Memorial Hermann Hospital, a top four US News and World Report Best Hospital for Rehabilitation.

Dr. Gutierrez grew up in South Texas, then moved to Houston where she earned her undergraduate degree at Rice University, her medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine, and completed her PM&R residency training at the Baylor College of Medicine-UT Houston Rehabilitation Alliance. She excitedly moved to San Antonio to lead the distinguished Department of Rehabilitation Medicine in 2020. Her area of clinical expertise is the care of patients with traumatic brain injury, stroke rehabilitation, and interventional spasticity management.

Dr. Gutierrez is a passionate advocate for Physiatry and for underrepresented groups in medicine via social media channels. She is the Social Media Editor of the American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Inspired by her upbringing in the Rio Grande Valley, she is dedicated to giving back to her community by mentoring students, trainees and young faculty from diverse backgrounds, and providing top level clinical care for the underserved.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two children. She also finds time for travel, bargain shopping, and competitive racing ranging from being an All-American in Masters Track to a two-time finisher of the Boston Marathon.



**Eric Wisotzky, MD, FAAPMR**

Dr. Eric Wisotzky is the Chief of the Division of Rehabilitation Medicine, Residency Program Director, and Director of Cancer Rehabilitation at the MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital (MNRH)/Georgetown University Medical Center. He is an Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine. Dr. Wisotzky graduated from medical school at Albany Medical College and completed a transitional internship at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. He trained at the Naval Aerospace Medical Institute in Pensacola, FL, and graduated as a flight surgeon. He did his residency training in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) at New York Presbyterian Hospital, the university hospital of Columbia and Cornell where he served as Chief Resident. Dr. Wisotzky is an Association Designated Institutional Official for the MedStar Health System GME consortium. He is a graduate of the MedStar Teaching Scholars Program, culminating in achieving the AAMC's *Medical Education Research Certification*. In addition, Dr. Wisotzky was a scholar at the Harvard Macy Institute's Program for Educators in Health Professions. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, musculoskeletal sonography, and electrodiagnostic medicine.