

“Burden” of Musculoskeletal Disease is an “Opportunity” for Physiatry



Jonathan S. Kirschner, MD, RMSK, FAAPMR

Physiatry Fellowship Director

Interventional Spine and Sports Medicine

Associate Attending Physiatrist

Hospital for Special Surgery

Associate Professor of Clinical Rehabilitation Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine

Board Member, United States Bone and Joint Initiative

Steering Committee Member, Burden of Musculoskeletal Disease

Over the summer, The United States Bone and Joint Initiative (USBJI) announced its publication of *The Hidden Impact of Musculoskeletal Disorders on Americans*, highlighting data in the 4th Edition of *The Burden of Musculoskeletal Diseases in the United States: Prevalence, Societal, and Economic Cost (BMUS)*.

AAPM&R is a founding member of USBJI and our Academy representative is Jonathan Kirschner, MD, FAAPMR. We connected with Dr. Kirschner to learn about the publication and its relevance to physiatry. Learn what he had to say below.

Can you tell us more about *The Burden of Musculoskeletal Diseases in the United States: Prevalence, Societal, and Economic Cost (BMUS)*?

Dr. Kirschner: BMUS is published by the United States Bone and Joint Initiative (USBJI) and is designed to raise awareness of the burden of musculoskeletal disease in the United States. As physiatrists, we are well aware of the high prevalence of these diseases and their effect on daily activities, quality of life, and the ability to work and play. Condition-based chapters provide figures on prevalence, health care utilization, and costs. Content can be downloaded for use in presentations and reports, and the figures and tables are visually appealing and drive the points home.

BMUS provides data needed to support research studies, for advocacy and education and to drive efforts to raise awareness for musculoskeletal health. The target audience is health policy experts and those developing health care advocacy positions, legislators, researchers, patients and those writing and presenting about musculoskeletal conditions. BMUS is disseminated to all congressional leaders and health affairs staff on Capitol Hill and has reached more than 100,000 users to date.

How did your role as a BMUS steering committee member and chapter author start?

Dr. Kirschner: I was asked to represent AAPM&R after Michael B. Furman MD, MS, FAAPMR, stepped down. I'm the only physiatrist on the committee and I appreciate the role to represent PM&R. This is a great opportunity for transdisciplinary collaboration amongst many specialties and professions that have similar clinical scopes and goals as us, including orthopedic surgery, rheumatology, athletic training, chiropractic, nursing, patient advocates, and sports medicine. Everyone is trying to promote musculoskeletal health, raise awareness and research funding, reduce preventable injury from sports, trauma and fragility fractures, and improve quality of life.

What are some key takeaways of this publication?

Dr. Kirschner: MSK conditions like arthritis, low back and neck pain, spinal deformity, osteoporosis, and work and traumatic injuries are common, costly, and often treatable but preventable. We need more public awareness and financial support, to compete with campaigns for heart disease and cancer, which are important, but do not touch as many lives as MSK conditions do.

You recently wrote a chapter about PM&R in the BMUS publication. Tell us about that.

Dr. Kirschner: While BMUS is very comprehensive, there are not as many rehabilitation topics as there should be. Fellow AAPM&R member Se Won Lee, MD, FAAPMR, and I wrote a chapter on neuromuscular disorders but included PM&R-relevant topics such as traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and nerve disorders as well. While not considered classic neuromuscular disorders, I thought it was important to mention more PM&R-relevant diagnoses and conditions in the BMUS textbook. These certainly are relevant to musculoskeletal health and are consistent with the goal of the publication.

How does the BMUS impact physiatry?

Dr. Kirschner: BMUS describes the prevalence of MSK disease and explains various PM&R-related conditions in laypersons terms. Its goal is to improve awareness and funding for MSK conditions, which should ultimately improve the awareness of the role of physiatry in managing these types of patients.



What are your top learnings from serving on this committee?

Dr. Kirschner: I learned that a common goal, improving musculoskeletal health, can bring people together of different cultural and medical backgrounds and that more can get done than you would imagine when patients are put first! I also learned that as a physiatrist, I am uniquely suited to bridge the gap between different medical professionals and serve as a team leader. On this committee I see how our broad skill set and unique perspectives are valued even though we may not have the name recognition amongst the public that we deserve. Publications like BMUS and organizations like the USBJI will help to change that. ❖

BMUS can be accessed at www.boneandjointburden.org.

Thank you to Dr. Kirschner for his participation in these important efforts with USBJI and the BMUS publication! Because of your support, through AAPM&R membership, we're able to get involved in these efforts and advocate for the PM&R specialty.