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

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.