PM&R Student Interest Groups - Get Involved
By Naimish Baxi, MD, Chief Resident, Mount Sinai Department of Rehabilitation Medicine

Welcome to the 2013 PM&R Student Interest Group newsletter. In its third edition, we continue to highlight PM&R medical school interest groups (PMRIG) throughout the country and their efforts to contribute to our field.

The newsletter was created from submissions by various PMRIG leaders that have been motivated throughout their medical school years to increase the specialty’s visibility and offer service to their community. Through the motivating narratives in this newsletter, we hope to inspire current medical students to participate in their respective interest groups, hold leadership positions, and spread the values and objectives of our specialty.

For more information on starting an interest group, please refer to our Medical Student Interest Group guidebook on the AAP website, www.physiatry.org > Career & Training Resources > Medical Students.

University of North Texas Health Science Center, Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine
By Ugochi Azuike

I first learned about PM&R during my senior year of college when we were assigned a class project to interview someone going into our field. At that time I wasn’t sure what specialty I wanted to go into so I just called through a listing of doctors. The only one to call me back was a physiatrist. I had never heard of this field before but it seemed to entail all of the aspects of medicine that I was really interested in. I had just come from working for the University of Texas football team and was very interested in MSK medicine and neurology. I guess I could say the seeds of PM&R were planted after the physiatrist I had interviewed let me work with him during my last semester.

Upon entering my first year of medical school I tried to find more information about PM&R from faculty but came up empty handed. It seemed like this was some secret field that no one knew much about. What I decided to do was create my own organization because I felt so strongly about the wonderful field of PM&R. If I could create awareness maybe it would not be so hard for physicians in other fields to tell me something about it. I also wanted other students to gain access to PM&R and even gain mentors, which is exactly what happened.

Through our organization, I was able to find myself a mentor that took me under his wing from my first year of medical school on. I was able to spend free time with him, gain valuable insight into the field, and make connections with other physiatrists in our region. Our club organized charity events to help pay for the bills of rehab patients that were having trouble. We had an NFL player from the Dallas Cowboys come and speak to our club about the importance of rehab and also had several physiatrists come and speak about the field and where it was headed. Continued on Page 2...
I believe because of all of this I have been very prepared for my rotations in PM&R and have really been able to get the most out of them. The field is so dynamic and is constantly growing. With the aging population and the advancements in technology for artificial limbs, etc, there are so many different avenues you can go into and I really look forward to being a part of this field.

Mount Sinai School of Medicine

By Audrey Chun

As the leader of the Medical Student PM&R Interest Group at Mount Sinai this year, the main thing I wanted to do was raise more awareness about the field among students. A lot of students seem to be at the point now where they’re hearing the terms rehabilitation medicine and physiatry a lot more than before but they’re still not entirely sure what the specialty entails. With the help of Kathy Aligene (PGY3), and a number of generous PM&R residents at Sinai who volunteered their time, we were able to put together a resident-medical student mentoring program for the first time this year. The purpose and goal of this program is to help guide medical students interested in learning more about PM&R and actively looking to pursue a career in rehab medicine. The role of the mentor is to provide medical students with more personal guidance about the world of rehab. Each resident mentor is paired with a mentee from the PM&R interest group and officially meets with them at least 2 times during the academic year. The mentor may update their mentees on research/volunteer opportunities, national/local PM&R meetings, grand rounds, journal articles, as well as coordinate shadowing opportunities on the floors or outpatient clinics, especially during an interesting procedure or patient visit.

We kicked the semester off with an introductory mixer event for both medical students and PM&R residents where students were able to meet with the residents as well as ask them any questions they have about the field. After the event, 8 pairs of students and residents were matched and, as the program gets larger over the years to come, we’re hoping this number will grow even more. Another main goal was to encourage students to join societies such as the AAPM&R or the NYSPMR and keep them up to date about the events and conferences made available to students through them.

For early next semester, I am putting together a panel of physicians in a number of different subspecialties in the field so that students can learn more about the diversity of career opportunities available through PM&R. This event will be followed later on in the semester by a “secrets of the match” event where recently matched 4th year students as well as a resident or two will be able to give students some more insight as to how they can plan ahead to be a good candidate for residency programs in PM&R.

New Jersey Medical School, UMDNJ

By Stephanie Tow

Hobbling around for several months in a full length leg brace and being told that I was not able to live my normal active lifestyle for at least six months almost caused me to break down during my first year of medical school. Since childhood, I’ve participated in various sports, coached swim teams, and have always lived an active lifestyle. I gained a natural interest in Sports Medicine through personal exposure to all sorts of minor sports injuries while also meeting athletes who overcame challenges in disability to meet their functional and athletic goals. In college, I majored in Neuroscience and enjoyed focusing on how impairments in the nervous system affected our bodily functions. Despite all of this however, I did not always know my career interests lay in the field of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R). In fact, coming into medical school, I was so adamant about going into a surgical field that this may have originally blinded me from realizing my true career interests.

Going through surgery and intensive rehabilitation for the knee injury I acquired while skiing moguls during my first year of medical school, I realized how much more I had learned about disability just from my temporary disability. Although our school’s campus was technically “handicap accessible,” I found that this certainly did not mean it was “handicap friendly.” I lost count of the number of handicap-unfriendly situations I faced. This included basic frustrations while trying to maneuver around our medical campus, such as being forced to negotiate stairs when no elevators nearby were functioning. I found myself disappointed when I encountered people, including current and future physicians, who did not offer to hold a door open for me as I followed closely behind them on crutches. I also acquired insight into the emotional toll disability could cause as I tried to find new ways to cope with the stress my injury had caused on top of the normal stressors in the life of a medical student. No longer able to go rock climbing, hiking, or skiing with friends, I became frustrated, trapped, and even depressed at times. I knew I had to find a way to channel my frustration into action.

Motivated to learn more about disability and contribute to helping others improve function, and originally thinking I was interested in Orthopaedic Surgery, I took advantage of a research opportunity in Biomechanics at the Hospital for Special Surgery the summer after my injury. In addition to my work in the lab, I worked with physicians in PM&R and Orthopaedics in their clinics. continued on Page 3...
New Jersey Medical School, UMDNJ continued

Enjoying the continuity of care and team-based approach to healthcare and helping our patients attain their functional goals, I finally realized how strong of a match PM&R was to my career and personal interests. Following these experiences, I committed myself to helping patients find ways not only to survive, but to live their lives. Since that summer, my exposure to various PM&R subspecialties has allowed me to get to know a diverse array of patients who have been inspirational in overcoming increasingly difficult challenges.

As president of the PM&R Interest Group at UMDNJ - New Jersey Medical School, I have been leading efforts to help advocate for populations with all sorts of disability. In addition to coordinating shadowing and research opportunities in PM&R, organizing faculty lectures on various PM&R topics, and introducing the realm of PM&R to students early on in medical school, we have also coordinated various community service opportunities for students to volunteer and get to know how we can better serve our patients with disability, such as helping pediatric patients with cerebral palsy overcome challenges in indoor rock climbing or volunteering at sporting events like the New York City Ironman. Inspired by the frustrations I faced while recovering from my knee injury, I am also currently working on an effort that will better incorporate learning about disability into our curriculum earlier in medical school, allowing medical students to place themselves in various scenarios to better empathize with patients who have a disability, with the hope that more physicians in the future will advocate for people with disability and have a better understanding of how they can serve various populations with disability. Through the efforts of our interest group over the past few years, we have helped many students realize how amazing the field of PM&R is and hope to continue encouraging those in healthcare to advocate for people with disability!
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Interest Group

Student Leader Experience

As a student entering medical school in the fall of 2011, I had already been exposed to PM&R through experiences of my family members, but I found that many of my classmates were uninformed about what the specialty entailed. I felt it was important for medical students to receive exposure to PM&R earlier in their careers, so when the opportunity arose to help start an interest group, I was intrigued. Along with my classmate Matthew Brown, starting and co-leading the PM&R student interest group at UWSMHP has been a great experience! It has allowed us to increase awareness of the specialty, plan student events and develop relationships with faculty. Currently, we are planning a hands-on experience for students to learn about EMG (electromyography) while they are studying neuroscience. We look forward to organizing additional educational events!

by Emmalie Severson
MD Candidate, Class of 2015
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Faculty Advisor Experience

I enjoy being a healthcare provider for persons with disabilities. It is fulfilling to help them maximize their functional potential at home and in the community. I remember that when I was a medical student, I shadowed a PM&R physician, and the experience opened the door to PM&R for me. I know that if I had not met that physician, I may not have learned about this wonderful specialty and gone on to my current career. Therefore, the presence of a PM&R student interest group provides an opportunity for all our medical students to learn about PM&R and its role in patient care. I encourage educational events that involve discussions to stimulate student interest and interactive, hands-on experiences to increase active student participation.

by Tommy Yu, M.D.
Assistant Professor
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Contribute to the Annual PM&R Student Interest Group (SIG) Newsletter

This newsletter was created to address a critical component of advancing the specialty of PM&R – the medical student interest group (SIG). SIGs are critical to introducing students to our specialty. SIG meetings may successfully recruit medical students to PM&R. It is especially beneficial to introduce students to PM&R at an early point in their medical school training. This will allow the student to truly understand the scope of the specialty, shadow and/or rotate in the field, get involved in research activities, and successfully plan for residency applications. SIG meetings can also be successful in introducing PM&R to students who will not go into our field. The more our non-physiatrist colleagues understand our specialty, the better our standing will be within the world of medicine.

This newsletter can be used for many purposes. It can be used to introduce medical students to PM&R. It can help to share ideas for events to existing PM&R SIGs. It is also meant to inspire PM&R departments across the country to reach out to their affiliated medical schools. If your department is not participating in your medical school’s activities, you are missing a critical means to advance your department and PM&R as a whole.

Please visit the AAP website to communicate with the leadership of the AAP’s Residents/Fellows Council regarding this newsletter and future newsletters.