



D.J. Kennedy  
MD, FAAPMR

## Let Us Toast to “The Power of PM&R” and the Unwavering Dedication of Physiatrists Everywhere!

D.J. Kennedy, MD, FAAPMR, AAPM&R President  
Professor and Chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and  
Rehabilitation Vanderbilt Center for Musculoskeletal Research

It feels like just yesterday when filled with anticipation and excitement I was penning my first presidential column. The journey since then has been a profound personal and professional experience. It has been a year of growth, learning and forging deeper connections within our vibrant community of PM&R physicians. The camaraderie developed during my tenure as president, along with the bonds formed throughout the years of volunteering, are some of my most valued relationships. These peer connections have not only enriched my personal life, but have also significantly influenced my professional growth and leadership skills.

Now as I sit down today to write my last presidential column, I can't help but reflect on the journey we've been on together in the past year, as well as the future ahead. Together, we have navigated the challenges and capitalized on the opportunities that have come our way.

Guided by our strategic plan goals, we have made significant strides in strengthening the organizational capacity of AAPM&R, while consistently focused on the strategic plan goals of the Academy:

1. Ensuring AAPM&R has the organizational capacity, resources, and prominence to achieve its vision to advance PM&R physicians and the specialty of PM&R.
2. Cultivating a diverse and vibrant community of PM&R physicians who are unified in their connection to the specialty and consider membership in AAPM&R to be essential to advancing their individual careers and the specialty.
3. Increasing awareness and ensuring that key stakeholders value the essential and transformative role of PM&R physicians in improving healthcare outcomes.
4. Vigorously advocating for the well-being of PM&R physicians as they advance optimal care for patients.
5. Supporting and guiding PM&R physicians in their practices for optimal success as healthcare transforms.

Together, we have worked to raise awareness of the essential role of PM&R physicians in improving healthcare outcomes. An example of the prominence and value of PM&R was notably demonstrated during the Olympics, where PM&R doctors were not only ubiquitous but also held major positions of influence. They served crucial roles, including being the chief medical officer of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, and team physicians for the gold medal-winning U.S. women's gymnastics and women's soccer teams, among many others.

Our collective commitment to advancing our individual careers and the field of PM&R has been evident in our discussions on leadership, volunteerism, and the evolving

landscape of education. By underscoring and promoting the power of PM&R, we will continue to help navigate and influence the transformations within healthcare.

Looking ahead, I am thrilled about the upcoming 2024 Annual Assembly themed "*The Power of PM&R*." This event represents an opportunity to come together as a community, to learn, share and celebrate our achievements. This year, the Assembly will be boasting more than 90 in-person and virtual sessions, augmented by our new Advanced Clinical Focus Days. These focus days are designed to deliver advanced and targeted content in the clinical areas that are most pertinent to you. Alongside these enriching sessions, we will be hosting the PM&R Party on the iconic USS Midway. We are also proud to present a roster of esteemed plenary speakers, including Dr. Glaucomflecken, Josh Sundquist and Dr. Beth Frates. Their contributions are certain to make this year's Assembly both enlightening and stimulating. I eagerly anticipate rekindling connections with longstanding colleagues, forging new friendships and immersing myself in the latest breakthroughs in our field. I sincerely hope to see you in-person, but if you are unable to attend, you can still participate virtually. Our virtual attendees will have round-the-clock access to all the invaluable educational content the Assembly provides. Furthermore, all sessions will be accessible on-demand for a full year to all registered attendees, with the opportunity to earn up to 118 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™.

At the Annual Assembly, I will also take great pride in passing the leadership baton to Scott Laker, MD, FAAPMR as our incoming Academy president. Dr. Laker, a dedicated member of AAPM&R for nearly 20 years and a personal friend, has

served on numerous committees, including the Board of Governors since 2016. Our collaborations over the years have been both rewarding and enlightening, deepening my respect for his dedication and passion for PM&R. As a visionary leader, he is steadfastly committed to advancing the field of PM&R, constantly seeking innovative solutions and opportunities for growth. I am entirely confident that under Dr. Laker's leadership, the Academy will continue to flourish and even reach new heights.

Lastly, I am profoundly grateful to the Academy for entrusting me with the privilege of serving as president, an honor that will remain a highlight of my lifetime. Nevertheless, the real heroes deserving of our gratitude are the more than 600 selfless volunteers and our exceptional professional staff. Your unwavering devotion, tireless efforts in producing educational content, advocating for our specialty, leading Academy-wide initiatives, amplifying psychiatry's voice, and contributing in countless other ways have been instrumental in advancing our specialty.

It is through our collective efforts that we will continue to shape the future for the betterment of all. Undoubtedly, the future is luminous for both PM&R and the Academy; and I am confident that we will continue to carry this beacon of hope and progress forward. As we continue our journey toward progress and excellence, let us toast to "*The Power of PM&R*" and the unwavering dedication of psychiatrists everywhere. Our collective strength and shared vision will continue to lead us toward a brighter future.



## Academy in Action

**AAPM&R is Defending the Role of Psychiatrists Against Encroachment from Non-PM&R Physicians and Non-Physicians**

- Richard G. Chang, MD, MPH, FAAPMR, chair of the State Advocacy Committee, submitted comments to the Washington Department of Health (WA DOH) advocating against a proposal to expand the scope of practice for naturopaths. The expansion would allow naturopaths to complete minor office procedures, opening the door for them to perform surgery. Dr. Chang warned of the negative impact such an expansion could have on patients in Washington.



## Academy in Action

**AAPM&R is Fighting to Reduce Psychiatrist Burden by Removing Prior Authorization Barriers**

- Your Academy submitted comments to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding the 2025 Outpatient Prospective Payment System proposed rule. The Academy's comments focused on the need for prior authorization (PA) reform and thanking CMS for its work to streamline this burdensome process for certain hospital outpatient department services.
- Your Academy endorsed S. 4349, the *Electronic Prior Authorization for Prescription Drugs Act*. This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senators Roger Marshall, MD (R-KS), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Roger Wicker (R-MS), and Joe Manchin (I-WV), would establish electronic PA procedures for prescription drugs in the private market.