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Giving Back and Making a Difference for My Specialty

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Volunteering is often seen as a selfless act, a way of giving back to the community or contributing toward a cause that one is passionate about.

However, the benefits of volunteerism extend far beyond the personal level, offering a multitude of rewards. These benefits include but are not limited to professional satisfaction, camaraderie and networking opportunities, in addition to the sense of fulfillment that comes from giving back and making a difference.

In the context of my professional volunteerism journey, I have found that service to a society like AAPM&R offers a dual benefit of aligning my professional and personal passions.

I started volunteering within AAPM&R with the relatively simple task of being a peer reviewer for the *PM&R* journal.

Saying yes to this needed activity helped open subsequent opportunities such as being invited to participate in a work-group tasked with defining the curriculum content for *PM&R* KnowledgeNow®. That experience led to identifying and working on cross-cutting topics, which eventually formed the basis for several *PM&R* journal supplements. I was fortunate to be asked to be a guest editor for one of these topics, Osteoarthritis. This was followed by working as a co-editor on the point-counter-point feature of the journal, and then serving as a senior editor. By engaging with the journal, I enhanced my analytical skills, was kept abreast of the latest research and developments in the field, all while serving an important function within the professional community.

Alongside these roles, I also volunteered as member of the Medical Education Committee; first as a member-at-large then eventually running Maintenance of Certification® for the Academy. I was also fortunate enough to be selected to engage with

the Academy's Future Leaders training program. This program was great, and had components of lobbying in Washington, D.C., media training and even instruction in how a non-profit board functions. This program equipped me with essential skills that served me well, first as a member-at-large on the Board of Governors, and then as the chair of the Inclusion and Engagement Strategic Coordinating Committee.

This later role was a source of great pride, as I know it is essential to create an inclusive environment for all *PM&R* doctors within AAPM&R. With an environment that is purposefully designed to be inclusive for all, it breaks down barriers to engagement and hopefully allows everyone to have the same rewards I have from my involvement with AAPM&R. This theme of inclusive engagement is something I have carried forward throughout my time on the Executive Committee and now as the president of the Academy.

These examples are only a single person's story of volunteerism, and there are numerous ways to get involved. I hope you will engage at whatever level you can. Volunteerism not only provides an avenue for personal growth and satisfaction, but also enhances professional skills, creates networking opportunities, and contributes toward the betterment of the professional community.

When we combine our collective efforts as volunteers with the professional staff and infrastructure of the Academy, we truly advance the field to the benefit of all. It is a journey worth embarking on, and one I hope you join me on. I know I have gained far more from my volunteer activities than I could ever give back, and I am truly grateful for that.