

## **Major Revision of the Program Requirements for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation**

### **Background**

Every 10 years, the ACGME Review Committees are required to evaluate the applicable specialty-specific Program Requirements for revision. The major revision process for the Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation began in late 2023 and the following activities have been conducted to date:

- 1) A stakeholder summit was held in November 2023, which included a presentation on the recommendations from the tri-organizational report.
- 2) A scenario planning workshop was held in March 2024, with participation of program directors representing a broad spectrum of physical medicine and rehabilitation residency programs; representatives from other specialties; residents; medical students; and public members.
- 3) Interviews were conducted to introduce into the requirements development process the perspectives of physical medicine and rehabilitation patients; physiatrists who have recently completed residency; and health care “influencers,” including leaders of health care systems and insurers.
- 4) A literature review was conducted on topics deemed relevant to physical medicine and rehabilitation resident education, now and in the future.

### **Definition of the Physiatrist**

Based on this work, the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Writing Group (the Writing Group), on behalf of the Review Committee for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, drafted the following new definition of the physiatrist of the future:

Physiatrists are physicians who specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation and provide comprehensive, patient-centered, preventative, acute, and chronic care for persons across the entire life spectrum who have a disability or pain caused by disease, disorder, or injury. The specialty of physical medicine and rehabilitation focuses on optimizing function, independence, and quality of life.

Physiatrists provide care that optimizes functional independence in their patients by advancing movement, endurance, and cognition, which may include assistive and adaptive methods. Therefore, the specialty of physical medicine and rehabilitation requires expertise in the diagnosis, treatment, and long-term management of neurologic and musculoskeletal impairments, as well as strong knowledge of the cardiopulmonary and vascular systems. Physiatrists often treat complex medical patients and must manage their comorbidities so that they can participate in their rehabilitation program. Physiatrists commonly treat patients across the life spectrum with acquired and congenital brain injuries, acute and chronic pain, burns and wounds, cancer-related

impairments, limb loss, musculoskeletal and neuromuscular disorders, spinal cord injuries, and sports injuries.

In addition to traditional methods, physiatrists use functional assessment, electrodiagnosis, and ultrasound to assess impairments. They manage disabling conditions and pain using a variety of tools. These tools may include medications; manual, thermal, and electrical modalities; minimally invasive procedures to manage pain and spasticity, including ultrasound and fluoroscopic-guided injections; and prescription of exercise, orthotics, prosthetics, adaptive equipment, and rehabilitation therapies.

Physiatrists lead teams to provide integrated, interdisciplinary care aimed at recovery of the individual's physical, emotional, medical, vocational, and social needs. They focus on the whole individual rather than the disease or injury. Their goal is to minimize activity limitations and maximize participation in society.

A competent physiatrist has broad-based clinical knowledge, strong critical thinking skills, and the flexibility to practice in many settings and circumstances. Excellent communication skills are essential for interactions with patients, families, and care teams. This includes helping patients and families understand prognosis and long-term management of their conditions.

Physiatrists serve as strong advocates for people with disabilities. They ensure their patients receive the appropriate health care and benefits. At the same time, physiatrists are good stewards of health care resources. They understand and collaboratively navigate the changing economic aspects of health care. Physiatrists use data and evidence-based practice to inform and advance patient care, resulting in high-value patient-centered care, continuous quality improvement, and equitable and ethical service delivery. As self-directed lifelong learners, physiatrists stay current with and critically evaluate advanced and emerging technologies.

### **Next Steps**

The Writing Group will begin development of the revised Program Requirements later this summer. Before beginning that work, the group seeks stakeholder input, in the form of a survey, on several key areas.

Please use the link below to access the survey. **The response deadline is August 9, 2024.**

[https://acgme.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_d0R15VY9JY83sIU](https://acgme.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d0R15VY9JY83sIU)