

EDITORIAL

Specialized curriculum for cancer rehabilitation medicine in physical medicine and rehabilitation residency training and beyond

INTRODUCTION

A specialized curriculum (curricula.aapmr.org) was prepared by the American Academy for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R) to provide general guidelines for training and written primarily for individuals involved in teaching residents and those in fellowship. The secondary audience for this curriculum is those who are out in practice and would like to benchmark their current knowledge, skills, and attitudes in specific content domain. This curriculum was developed as an overview of competencies currently favored for the performance and training of PM&R and to serve as a guide to published references and educational resources available to physiatrists. This curriculum is meant to augment rather than supplant the role program and fellowship directors and faculty play in the training of physiatrists. By providing information about training benchmarks, AAPM&R hopes to improve the teaching and performance of physiatrists.

BACKGROUND

Through the PM&R BOLD Visioning process, several critical graduate medical education (GME) issues have been identified that must be addressed to move this specialty forward to thrive in the future of health care. One of the main priorities for the Academy is to develop a process to realign the content of GME training by setting standards for training that will advance the knowledge and skills of physiatrists to meet the needs of new practice models coming out of PM&R BOLD and the future of physiatry in general. The goal of this curriculum is to outline the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are needed to help physiatrists prepare to embrace, lead, and practice in the future environment of PM&R.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Academy is defining specialized curriculum and training guidelines as outlined here:

- **Specialized curriculum:** A document that outlines what one should be able to do, which includes:

- Competencies
- KSAs (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
 - Knowledge: Condition of being aware of something
 - Skills: Ability to perform a task or activity
 - Attitudes: Feelings, emotions, beliefs, or value about something (influence people's choice of actions)
- Identified whether each KSA is core or specialized. Because each competency can have varying levels of difficulty, they are rated as basic, intermediate, and advanced within core and specialized levels.
 - Core: Every physiatrist should know it at the completion of residency training.
 - Specialized: Only those that specialize in this area would be expected to know it.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of training in PM&R, trainees should be prepared to appropriately recommend procedures as indicated by the findings of consultative evaluation, with explicit understanding of accepted specific indications, contraindications, and diagnostic/therapeutic alternatives; perform procedures and examinations safely, completely, and expeditiously and conduct clinical assessment and patient monitoring; identify risk factors for each procedure, understand how to minimize each, and recognize and appropriately manage complications when they occur; acknowledge the limitations of PM&R procedures and personal skills and know when to request help; and understand the principles of quality measurement and improvement.

SUPPORTING A SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM

Competence in knowledge, skills, and attitudes requires the foundation of didactic and hands-on learning that occurs within the comprehensive training of a PM&R specialist.

Although the specialized curriculum may inform recommendations to the Accreditation Council for Graduate

Medical Education regarding program requirements, it should not be limited by this consideration; rather, it should focus on “what should be” in order to achieve the goals of physiatrists and the specialty. The Academy’s goal is to approach the development of specialized curricula from an aspirational and educational perspective – not regulation.

Although there is core knowledge that all physiatrists need to have in order to be a general physiatrist, many physiatrists go on to become specialists in a specific content domain, that is, musculoskeletal, brain injury, cancer rehabilitation, etc. For this reason, specialized curricula are needed to outline what specialized physiatrists need to know in each domain.

STRUCTURE

The following Specialized Curriculum for Cancer Rehabilitation Medicine in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Residency Training and Beyond was written by the AAPM&R’s Cancer Rehabilitation Medicine Curriculum Workgroup.

The curriculum is organized into six content areas:

- Global impairment/symptom specific
- Cancer diagnosis specific
- Procedures
- Areas of practice
- Wellness/survivorship
- General information

Within each content domain, a series of competencies has been identified. Each competency is tagged as (1) KSA type of competency; (2) core or specialized level; and (3) within core or specialized levels, whether the particular competency represents a basic, intermediate, or advanced KSA.

This cancer rehabilitation medicine curriculum outlines the longitudinal expectation of what PM&R residents (core level) and those in fellowship training (specialized level) should generally know upon graduating. Program directors should use this curriculum as a tool to help augment their current training program and to identify any gaps they may currently have in their programs. If any gaps are identified, the program director should implement lectures, conferences, journal clubs, and workshops, as well as clinical experiences as feasible, to fill these gaps. Educational resources for cancer rehabilitation medicine will vary among training programs, and the aim of this curriculum tool is to help elevate the level of training among all programs.


After completing residency and fellowship training, physiatrists must continue their professional development over the course of their careers. They do this by learning from their practice and by participating in educational activities, which includes completing formal continuing medical education. It is essential for physiatrists to remain

competent in their area of practice in order to provide the best quality of health care to their patients and communities. Experienced physiatrists can use this specialized curriculum to benchmark their current knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with the goal to self-identify any gaps or areas of focus for future growth.

As the field of cancer rehabilitation medicine continues to grow, it is important to ensure that physiatrists are provided with the tools needed to be successful. This specialized curriculum outlines the current competencies that are essential to ensure residents, those in fellowship training, and practicing physiatrists have the foundation required to be successful. Because the field continues to evolve, this curriculum is meant to be a living document and will be updated accordingly. The goal is to provide a framework for the field of PM&R to ensure physiatrists receive the training necessary to provide the best patient care.

You can access this curriculum and the other curricula in this series at curricula.aapmr.org

Eric Wisotzky MD ¹

Sean Smith MD ² 

Lisa Ruppert MD ³

R. Samuel Mayer MD, MEHP ⁴


Samman Shahpar MD ⁵

Brian McMichael MD ⁶

Megan Clark MD ⁷

Megan Brunner MBA ⁸

Brian Thompson MBA, FACEHP ⁸

Mary Vargo MD ⁹ 

¹Medstar Health/Georgetown-National Rehabilitation Hospital, Washington, DC, USA

²University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

³Memorial Sloan Kettering, New York, New York, USA

⁴Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

⁵Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, Chicago, Illinois, USA

⁶Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

⁷University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas, USA

⁸AAPM&R, Rosemont, Illinois, USA

⁹Case Western Reserve University (MetroHealth), Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Correspondence

Megan Brunner, AAPM&R, 9700 W. Bryn Mawr, Rosemont, IL, USA.

Email: mbrunner@aapmr.org

ORCID

Sean Smith  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9936-8750>

Mary Vargo  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6286-6876>