



Medical Student PM&R Interest Group Spotlight: UMDNJ–New Jersey Medical School

Samuel Chu, MD

(PGY1–Northwestern McGaw/Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago
New Jersey Medical School Class of 2011)

It is almost impossible for a medical student at New Jersey Medical School (NJMS) to go through four years of training without gaining a significant understanding of and exposure to PM&R. The strength and reputation of the NJMS/Kessler Residency Program, coupled with the active involvement of the PM&R Interest Group has helped to integrate physiatry into the academic and extracurricular fabric at NJMS. Physiatrists are involved in medical education from the start, serving as lecturers for pre-clinical physical exam courses, mentors, and instructors in the fourth-year mandatory clerkship. The PM&R Interest Group is also involved from the beginning at an annual student activities fair where students can sign up to participate in a multitude of educational events, activities and electives held throughout the year.



UMDNJ PM&R interest group

Last year, the PM&R Interest Group at NJMS was led by an eight-person executive board and had over 120 members on its roster. The executive board consists of students from all years and included specific lecture, shadowing, and community service coordinators. The board was transitioned in April of the previous year, leaving the summer months to prepare for the year ahead. Using a three-pronged approach consisting of coordinating educational events, clinical opportunities, and service activities, the goal of the interest group is to provide students at NJMS with a broad array of experiences within the specialty of PM&R.

At the student activities fair for first-year students, the PM&R Interest Group had a strong presence, with flyers, a presentation board outlining planned activities, and custom interest group reflex hammers. We held our first official meeting a few weeks later with our faculty advisor and several residents who helped to describe the specialty, discuss their own experiences, and answer questions from students. Later in the fall, we also helped organize a workshop in the cadaver lab to learn more about clinical anatomy under the guidance of residents. In the spring, we invited attending physiatrists to present lectures on a variety of topics. A residency panel was held in March with the graduating fourth-year students who had recently matched into PM&R to discuss the application process and answer any related questions.

In the fall, we were fortunate to work with a group of PM&R sports medicine attending physicians who cover local high school football games. We established a sideline shadowing program where students from all four years could sign up to work the games with the covering attending and usually a resident. In these games, students learned how to evaluate concussions and other sports-related injuries. The program

was extremely popular, and we had students present at every game. In addition, we set up a clinical shadowing program that paired interested students with physiatrists at our institution.

The interest group has maintained strong ties with surrounding facilities over the years, including a local children's rehabilitation hospital. Our students have volunteered with the hospital's swim meets, track and field meets, the Tri-State Wheelchair Games, and many other exciting events. Students have found these events to be particularly rewarding, educational, and fun.

This year, we also established an online group page with articles, presentations, and other relevant documents that could serve as resources for students. The group also helped to promote events within the residency program such as journal clubs and the annual research symposium. Some additional plans include purchasing reference books that students can borrow when on an elective, expanding the current lecture series, and establishing additional volunteer and shadowing opportunities.

The NJMS PM&R Interest Group continues to have a remarkable level of student involvement and interest. However, the activities of the group would not be possible without the strong support and involvement of attending physicians and residents in the NJMS Department of PM&R and the foundation established by group leaders in years past. We are excited to see what the new year has to offer!

Article excerpt is from: The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation | AAPM&R