



Michael J. Dunn, MD

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has strong history at Medical College

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Born of the wars of the 20th Century, physical medicine and rehabilitation was a field developed in direct response to the considerable need for wounded soldiers to recuperate and return to duty. As medical and surgical care improved, survival despite profound injury became more common, further underscoring the need for care that stressed rehabilitation over bed rest. Soon, the field had expanded from Army hospitals to the civilian sector.

The Medical College of Wisconsin's Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) was one of the first of its kind in the United States. Its presence has enhanced the care of injured people in the Milwaukee region and state by bringing the latest rehabilitation techniques and treatments to the community. The department has trained numerous physiatrists who now populate Wisconsin as high-quality clinicians and leaders. This year marks a milestone in the evolution of PM&R in Wisconsin, as it is our department's 55th anniversary.

In 1951, Ray Piaskoski, MD, was appointed chair of the newly established department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Marquette University School of Medicine, our predecessor institution. Milwaukee County General Hospital, Veterans Administration Medical Center, and Curative Workshop were the primary sponsors of the training program during its initial development, and their

modern iterations continue in that capacity today.

Strong leadership has been a tenet of the department. In the early 1960s, chairs from our department held the presidency of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for two consecutive years, helping guide the field nationally during its formative years.

Today, Timothy R. Dillingham, MD, chair and professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, leads the department. Since his appointment in 2003, the department has grown from 13 faculty members to 24. Training programs were rebuilt and expanded with both clinical and research fellowships as well as a special pathway for selected resident academicians to pursue research projects of larger scope. Residency and fellowship programs have flourished and are highly sought after by graduating medical students.

Clinical activities have grown substantially. Froedtert Hospital is the department's home, and the strong partnerships established with Curative Care Network, the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin continue.

Collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts are hallmarks of PM&R, which works closely with other departments at the Medical College of Wisconsin to provide the highest quality care for patients with specific disorders. An excellent example of such interdisciplinary care is the SpineCare program, started by the Department

of Neurosurgery in partnership with the Department of PM&R. State-of-the-art nonoperative management of persons with back and neck pain, spinal stenosis, and other spine disorders distinguish this program.

At Children's Hospital, subspecialists in pediatric rehabilitation provide consultative care for children admitted with traumatic injuries and disabling diseases and conditions. Management of excessive tone and spasticity, a major problem for children with cerebral palsy and brain injuries, is a particular area of expertise. Our new Tone and Spasticity program enlists the collaborative efforts of neurosurgical and orthopaedic specialists at Children's Hospital to tailor specific programs for the individual child.

The large rehab division at the Zablocki VA manages a general rehabilitation service and a regional Spinal Cord Injury center. Veterans with spinal trauma due to injuries sustained on active duty and veterans with conditions such as spinal stenosis receive comprehensive rehabilitation care through the center.

The PM&R department is widely recognized as providing premier trauma rehabilitation care at Froedtert Hospital, the regional Level I trauma center. Our 37-bed inpatient service is home to another Spinal Cord Injury service, a traumatic brain injury service, a general rehabilitation service and a specialized stroke rehabilitation service.

Froedtert has the only regional, accredited comprehensive stroke pro-

gram, and our PM&R department provides inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation care for these patients. Through early consultation and transfer to the rehabilitation service, followed by outpatient management of paralysis and increased tone, a continuum of care is rendered for these patients to maximize their recovery and optimize functional capabilities. The adult tone and spasticity service is one of the largest in the region.

College physiatrists also bring unique skills and insights to the multidisciplinary care of patients with musculoskeletal disorders. This spans the continuum from the elderly person with trochanteric bursitis to the elite athlete with a stress fracture. Our department of PM&R works closely with the departments of Anesthesiology and Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine to manage patients with recalcitrant pain conditions as well, using evidence-based rehabilitation programs that focus on conditioning, self-efficacy, and functional restoration.

Our strong commitment to furthering rehabilitation science through research to benefit our patients inspired the department's new initiative, the REACTOR program, which aims to create stronger translational connections to the basic sciences and to expand outcomes research. In REACTOR (Research Advisors in Cellular, Translational, and Outcomes Research), seasoned investigators from the Medical College are enlisted to mentor PM&R research efforts and develop research projects

with the goal of obtaining external funding. This program, started by Dr Dillingham, links PM&R with genomics, imaging, and cellular biology for innovative research.

Departmental research is supported by funds from a number of federal sources, including the NIH. For example, external funds are supporting research in the Zablocki VA's robotics laboratory on the benefits of rehabilitation through robotic training for patients with strokes and other paralytic syndromes. Our faculty also conduct federally funded research into the optimal management of patients with strokes.

Even medical students can conduct research under the mentorship of PM&R faculty members, as summer research stipends are readily available. The College also offers an array of learning and clerkship opportunities for medical students during their second, third, or fourth years. Our commitment to education is further exhibited by residency and fellowship programs that train the next generation of rehabilitation specialists.

If history is any indication, this next generation will continue to see fascinating advances in physical medicine and rehabilitation. And if our history is any indication, the strengths of the College's department of PM&R will enable us to meet future challenges, provide the highest quality of rehabilitative care, train stellar academicians and practitioners, and advance our science through investigative research.

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