COMBINING TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

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Received: December 14, 2022
Accepted: December 15, 2022

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How to cite: Acer Kasman S. Combining traditional and innovative approaches in physical medicine and rehabilitation. Anti Aging East Eur 2022;1(2):134-135 https://doi.org/10.56543/aaeeu.2022.1.2.10

Introduction

I am a rheumatologist at a tertiary care center in Istanbul, Türkiye. I joined Rheumatology Clinic of Kartal Dr Lutfi Kirdar City Hospital in 2021. My main fields of expertise include rheumatology and physical medicine and rehabilitation (PMR).

My clinical career

I passed medical training at Hacettepe University and PMR training at Diskapi Yıldırım Beyazıt Education and Research Hospital, both in Ankara. I spent four years as a resident at a rehabilitation clinic and qualified as a PMR specialist in 2015. Subsequently, I was fortunate to join PMR Department at Karabük University for 10 months. I acquired basic skills in electromyography (EMG) at Diskapi Hospital and advanced my EMG skills at Karabük University Hospital. My PMR mentors were Fatma Aytül Çakcı, Ece Ünlü Akyüz, and Müfit Akyüz who generously shared their experience and offered me an opportunity to become a specialist in the field. I am also proud of my ultrasonography (USG) skills, and I treasure related certificate in my personal archive.

A turning point in my career was in 2015 when I passed the National Fellowship Examination in PMR and joined as a research fellow the Department of Rheumatology at Marmara University (Istanbul). I completed my rheumatology residency there in 4 years.

During this period, I successfully planned and completed various national and international studies. At the same time, I advanced my capillaroscopy and USG skills, attended with presentations several national and international PMR and rheumatology congresses. My current mentor, Prof. Mehmet Tuncay Duruöz, offered me an opportunity to become an educator and successfully pass the National «Senior Assistant» examination in the field of PMR in 2021.

I currently enjoy working as a physician in a busy rheumatology clinic and taking part in scientific research. My busy schedule includes attendance of numerous conferences, writing research papers and book chapters, reviewing for several indexed journals, and actively promoting scholarly items on social media platforms.

My views on research and clinical practice in PMR

PMR offers a range of benefits such as pain relief, maximizing functional abilities, and improving quality of life. It may also reduce fear of movement, treat mood and sleep disorders, cope with stress and fatigue. The philosophy of PMR also envisages environmental regulations not only during treatment time but also across all areas of life. Medical knowledge and practice constantly change. Contrary to the millennia old traditional medicine, evidence-based PMR has gained scientific prestige and global popularity over the past few decades.
PMR specialists currently integrate old and new approaches and advance their skills by observing individual clinical cases and synthesizing new evidence. Innovative PMR research broadens horizons in the field and offers a lot international collaboration and networking. By gaining new information and advancing PMR methods, researchers and clinicians may improve safety and quality of life of their patients.

How PMR is used in my country to promote health, rejuvenate, and treat chronic inflammatory diseases?

PMR as a specialty is gaining momentum in my home country. There are many highly skilled Turkish PMR clinicians who may improve health of numerous patients who seek quality rehabilitation services. Our PMR specialists actively communicate with their patients to better understand their needs and employ the most useful rehabilitation techniques, thereby personalizing treatment approaches and observing safety precautions.

Interdisciplinary rehabilitation teams operate in numerous large local centers, structurally integrated with their branches for critically-ill patients across country. Current local priorities include technologically-advanced treatment, diagnostic, and monitoring procedures for acute and chronic disabilities. Virtual care for neurologic, musculoskeletal, and connective tissue disorders is also becoming a major part of PMR.

My views on evidence-based PMR and its perspectives

Evidence-based PMR guides essential medical principles and approaches and opens new avenues for standardized PMR approaches. It is now the mainstay of care for individuals with neurologic and orthopedic dysfunctions.

Innovative research and technologies will expand the scope of conditions that can be assessed and managed by PMR specialists.

How numerous resorts and spas in my country may help treat various diseases?

In my country, there are about 300 medical spas, health resorts, and facilities for treatment, prevention, rehabilitation, and wellness tourism. These are spread across 48 states. Balneotherapy with natural healing water, peloids, gases, and climatic conditions is an integral part of PMR. Balneological facilities can be used for therapies at appropriate temperatures and in combination with other treatment modalities. Non-inflammatory diseases of the musculoskeletal system such as osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia syndrome, soft tissue injuries, and sports injuries are the main indications for balneotherapies. Most facilities include exercise, massage, electrotherapy, and hydrotherapy units.

My message to colleagues in Eastern Europe implementing evidence-based PMR to cope with stress, treat diseases, and fully enjoy life

With advances in technology, treatment approaches in medicine may change in the coming decades. Preventive medicine will come to the fore, the average age will increase, and the field of combating disability will grow. My message is to explore evidence-based practices and combines these with traditional PMR philosophy!