

Statement of Solidarity
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania

The Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation stands in solidarity with communities of color in denouncing all acts of racism. The recent killings of George Floyd and other people of color at the hands of law enforcement have once again unveiled the raw and continued stain of overt and institutionalized racism that has plagued our nation since its inception.

We see this stain very clearly in how social determinants of health and implicit bias negatively affect people of color. As physiatrists, we focus not only on medical care, we also prescribe targeted physical exercise and functional rehabilitation with the goal of returning people to their communities. From this vantage point we clearly see how social determinants of health and functional outcomes are intertwined. Our department strives to identify these determinants and through a team approach to rehabilitative care, minimize their negative impacts upon patients of color.

While we as a department look outward in our role in fighting racism, we also look inward at how we can promote inclusion and diversity within our department. Particular to the issue of racism, we affirm the struggles of our housestaff and faculty of color and the institutionalized obstacles that frequently impede their pathways to success. As a department we strive to promote an environment of inclusivity regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. We strive to recruit, retain, and promote diverse housestaff and faculty. By doing so we recognize that this benefits the entire health system as we foster a more diverse housestaff and faculty.

We are proud that the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is diverse. Our faculty is comprised of 17% black or latinx professionals, one of whom recently made Associate Professor in the Tenure track. Our faculty and residents see diversity as a strength. Our black and latinx faculty fill some of our most vital leadership positions in which they not only provide care, they also have a platform to influence our culture in an impactful way. These leaders inspire others through their professionalism and character to embrace diversity as a core value.

The Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has a rich history as the oldest physical medicine and rehabilitation department in the country. We recognize that in order to continue to build upon this history we must continue to condemn racism, promote equality for the patients we serve, and cultivate a culture of inclusion and diversity in our own department. We eagerly join with Penn Medicine's Action for Cultural Transformation (ACT) to serve as a vehicle to transform our health system and broader community.