

Lisa A. Merritt, MD, FAAPMR

Member-at-Large of the Board of Governors

Tell members a little bit about yourself:

Your practice—I obtained my medical degree from Howard University after completing my B.S. at Georgetown University with honors. I underwent training in family and community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, then completed my residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. During residency, I was co-founder of the resident council of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation as well as the Resident Section of the National Medical Association, composing the by-laws under the leadership of my mentor, Dr. Vivian Pinn. A co-coordinator and presenter for the African American Special Interest Group of the AAPMR, I am also a graduate of the faculty development program at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, GA and the Gulf Coast Leadership Institute in Venice, FL. My current medical practice is Kinesia Rehab Group in Sarasota, has transitioned to virtual care in addition to home visit care and consulting work. In addition, I split my time between locums assignments, the most recent in Northern Arizona working with significant numbers of Native Americans and studying post COVID-19 presentation optimizing treatment plans for them.

Your life outside of work—In 1995, while managing my practice specializing in catastrophic injury, and serving as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of California Davis, I founded the Multicultural Health Institute (MHI) in Sacramento, California to focus attention on health inequities and the economic impact of prevention strategies. I am a former seven-year President of the Capitol Medical Society and Vice President of the Golden State Medical Society, and was an original member of the California Office on Minority Health statewide multicultural health task force and strong advocate and originator of initial policies on improving cultural and linguistic standards in health delivery in the State of California as well as involvement in leadership for the statewide PM&R society.

What have you advanced in your local community outside of or in conjunction with your medical practice?

In my practice and through the MHI, I've had a singular impact through several highly-successful initiatives; the Sarasota Community Health Guide, MHI Scholars program, and creation of the Gatekeepers and Safekeepers of Community Health, lay health advisors and educators involved in neighborhood activities to reduce disparities through preventive health education and health screenings. MHI works with schools, local community and faith-based organizations to promote science, technology, engineering, creative arts math and health (STEAMH) careers and cultivate future health leaders. I have mentored numerous young people in college, medical school and PM&R residency preparation, and encourage them to consider work in underserved communities.

What accomplishments/honors are you particularly proud of that you would like to share with members?

I have been published in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation, and have lectured nationally and internationally on rehabilitation and multicultural health issues. I am regularly interviewed on topics in the media and teach as adjunct professor and pre-Med advisor at New College, the top honors college of Florida. I work on diversity issues nationally and locally in Florida to increase future health leadership and increase minority participation in clinical trials and as researchers.

What special skills or unique attributes do you bring to the Executive Committee of the Board?

My extensive leadership, strategic planning and mediation skills. I helped found and serve the Academy in a number of aspects, most notably as co-founder of the Resident Council and the African American SIG. I have a variety of work experiences from private solo practice, serving as medical director in hospital-based and free-standing rehabilitation units, transitional TBI program development, rehabilitation program assessment, administrative medicine role in developing care coordination systems for a large ACO in SW Florida, peer review work and Locums work. I've served as a consultant to large national/international corporations, such as Intel, Sprint and USAA, as well as smaller health and wellness organizations; in addition to working in the NFP sector including community-based participatory research projects. The quality and impact of my work has been cited in publications such as *Fortune Magazine* and I have received local and national recognition such as the 2019 AAPM&R Distinguished Service Award, the MLK Celebration Honor for Outstanding Community Service (2019, 2017 and 2012), The National Medical Association Council on Concerns of Women (2014) and the 2017 National Council on Concerns of Jewish Women, Women of Power Award, Golden State Medical Association Recognition Award, Fulton County Wellness Campaign Community Service Award and more.

What is a current or future challenge to the Academy or the specialty that you look forward to addressing as a Board Member?

A current challenge to the Academy that I look forward to addressing is the numerous encroachments by other medical disciplines upon the PM&R specialty and the need to promulgate our unique brand; training and capacity, and the inherent value of these contributing to excellence in care, improved patient satisfaction and outcomes.

What have we not asked you that you think members should know about you?

I have always been a healer and someone who tries to bring the best out in people from all walks of life. I have a great sense of humor. My background is a diverse multicultural background, which has provided me with a unique perspective in the founding of MHI. My personal and professional experience and international exposure have significantly impacted my current views and practices on health care and wellness. The pervasive health disparities highlighted by the disparate effect of COVID-19 further fuels my desire to share this knowledge and continue to inspire improvement in development of future diverse leadership.