



DR. SARAH FREHLICH

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PHYSICAL MEDICINE
AND REHABILITATION
(PHYSIATRY)

What attracted you to medicine?

I always had an interest in human physiology throughout my schooling, but I didn't decide on medicine until I had the opportunity to work as an undergrad summer student in the Multiple Sclerosis Clinic. Through that experience I saw how the neurologists formed long lasting relationships with their patients and were an integral part of the patient's medical journey. It was after witnessing the powerful impact of a good doctor-patient relationship that I chose to pursue medicine.

What attracted you to your specialty?

I enjoy physiatry because it has a diverse patient population involving rehabilitation of neurologic and musculoskeletal disorders. There is an engaging mix of diagnostic, clinical and interventional skills within our specialty, through areas like electromyography, spasticity treatment with botulinum toxin injections and ultrasound guided joint injections to name a few. Most of all, I love that our specialty focuses on function and quality of life. We are lucky to be able to work closely with allied health staff in an interdisciplinary team to help patients recover and adapt to life changing diagnoses like stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury and amputations.

What do you find the most rewarding in your residency training?

Our resident physician group is like a second family to me and one of the best parts of residency! In our residency training itself, it is very rewarding to be a part of a patient's recovery and rehabilitation journey. There is also a lot of variety within our training both in terms of patient conditions but also in the scope of practice where we can be involved in diagnosis, conservative and lifestyle management, pharmacologic management and interventional management with bedside procedures like joint and soft tissue injections. It is this variety that makes residency training so engaging and exciting to learn about so many different areas.

What do you find the most challenging in your residency training?

Our field is rewarding because we are a part of our patient's rehabilitation journey and get to see their improvements over time. However, this can still be incredibly challenging because our patients have often experienced a life changing event, be it spinal cord injury, brain injury, stroke or amputation. It is a very emotional time and I feel a lot of empathy for them, their circumstances and change in function. In terms of the structure of residency training, the most challenging part was that we spent the first two years of our training in off-service rotations learning about fields related to physiatry, but not doing our core physiatry rotations until almost the start of our third year.

What energizes you outside of residency?

Being active is the main way I recharge outside of residency. In the summer I love to hike throughout Kananaskis, Canmore and Banff. I enjoy cross-country skiing in the winter and joined the Peloton craze, so I do spin and exercise classes all the time to blow off steam. Outside of COVID times I love going out to all our amazing Calgary restaurants and always look forward to the big food festivals every year.