



Staying the Course During COVID-19 MSKR Service Line



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The Musculoskeletal and Rheumatology (MSKR) Service Line is driven by multidisciplinary partnerships across departments, divisions, clinicians, administrators and various other supporting cast members. Our disease team structure and the regular meetings for each are the primary vehicles and forum that drive quality and cost efficiency goals and efforts forward on a continuous basis. Our annual goals, set at the beginning of each new fiscal year, provide a roadmap and guide to the primary objectives we set our sights on and hope to achieve throughout the year.

Like every other facet of our lives, much of this well-oiled machine came to a halt in March 2020. March and April were largely consumed with pivoting to telemedicine and determining how we could safely provide care to patients. Across the service line, comprised of orthopaedics, rheumatology, pain medicine, physical medicine & rehabilitation, and musculoskeletal imaging, there are inherent differences that dictated how each underlying service had to adjust their business model. During these initial months of the pandemic, certain service line priorities appropriately took a backseat to more pressing issues.

But once the initial flurry subsided, the health system rallied with a clear focus on getting back to business and continuing

to push the envelope in driving care advancements. We found that a return to focusing on bigger picture and longer term goals was welcome by all, as providers and administrators alike were fatigued with the day-to-day of providing care in the pandemic environment. We also found that certain initiatives could be moved forward more quickly due to the positive impact on outcomes or reduced risk they could provide during the pandemic. This included reductions in length of stay as we got patients out of the hospital more quickly, and an increased rate of discharge to home as we reduced the use of skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) where appropriate. We also harnessed this momentum to implement same-day discharge hip and knee replacement surgery on a faster timeline than originally anticipated.

We look forward to a day when the pandemic is in the rear view mirror, but we will not forget the health system's impressive and steadfast response, and the care innovations that were put into place that will be harnessed for the long term. We will also remember how quickly we were able to pivot to meet the needs of our patients, and leverage this acute awareness of what we are capable of to accelerate the advancement of the service line.