



# University of Washington Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Fellowship Program

Academic year 2025-2026

**UW Medicine**  

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**DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION MEDICINE**  

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# Mission and Aims

## **MISSION**

- The mission of the University of Washington (UW) Spinal Cord Injury Medicine (SCIM) fellowship training program is to provide physicians with the knowledge and skills to deliver comprehensive, quality, and compassionate care to individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) and to support the UW Medicine aim to improve the health of the public. We are dedicated to providing care to individuals throughout the lifetime of injury and strive to maximize health, independence, productivity, and quality of life. We value person-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, education, and academic scholarship.

## **AIMS**

- The University of Washington SCIM fellowship training program aims to train fellows who will dedicate a significant portion of their careers in the delivery of care to individuals with SCI, will continue providing SCI education to peers, trainees, and/or consumers, and will dedicate time to community activities advocating for individuals with SCI.



# UW SCIM Fellowship History

- UW Rehabilitation Professor/VA SCI National Chief Consultant Dr. Margaret Hammond at forefront of SCIM fellowship development
- ACGME accredited since 1998
  - 33 fellow graduates since 1998
- Currently approved for 2 SCIM fellows
  - 1 UW funded
  - 1 Craig H. Neilsen Foundation grant funded
    - Successful receipt of grant and recruitment of 2 fellows since 2017
    - Grant awarded 2024-2027
  - No difference in fellowship experience between the 2 fellows



# UW SCI Medicine Board Certified Staff

- UW Department of Rehabilitation Medicine has the highest concentration of SCI board certified physicians in the country!
  - Juan Asanza
  - Heather Barnett
  - Stephen Burns
  - Carolyn Campbell
  - Debby Crane
  - Kate Delaney
  - Audrey Leung
  - Katya Radkevich
  - Shawn Song
  - Kendl Sankary
  - Jelena Svircev



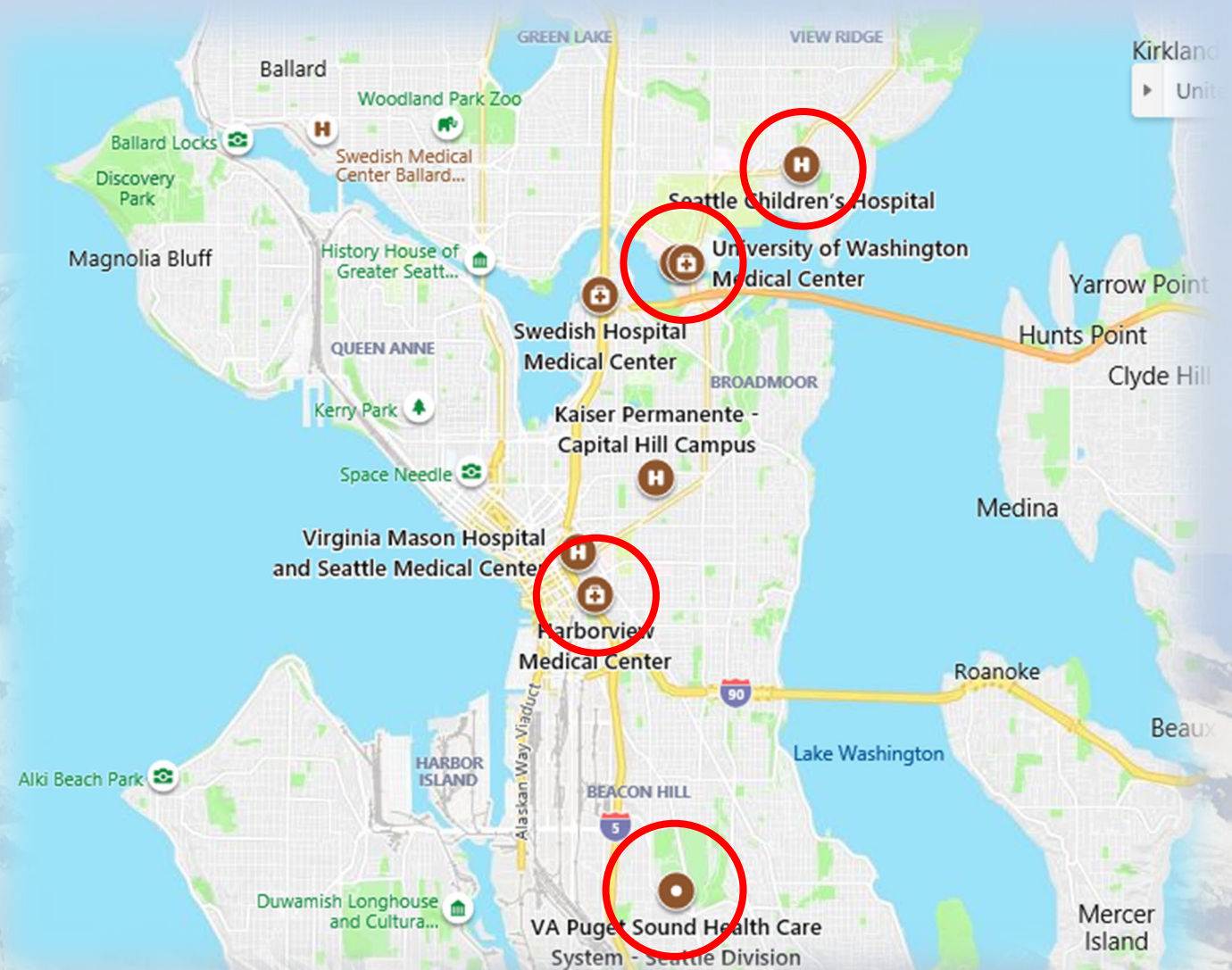
# Rotation Schedule

- The 12-month academic year is divided into rotations of at least 1 month duration.
  - 4 months inpatient SCI at VA and Harborview Medical Center (2x2 month blocks)
  - 4 months outpatient SCI: VA, Harborview Medical Center, University of Washington, and Seattle Children's Hospital
  - 2 months Harborview Medical Center consults - acute SCI consults
  - 2 months academic/research activities and VA SCI consults



# Rotation sites

All sites within ~ 7 miles





# University of Washington-Montlake site

SCI Clinic

Spasticity Clinic

Transitions Clinic

Neuromuscular Pulmonary  
Clinic

Patient population: Medically  
complex SCI (complications of  
surgery), trauma, congenital  
SCI





# Seattle Children's Hospital

Spina Bifida Clinic (2-4 days  
per year)





# Harborview Medical Center, Inpatient SCI

Patient population: “Classic SCI” younger males, traumatic SCI, psychosocially complex; HMC is a Safety Net Hospital

Inpatient SCI: General rehab unit

- 26 bed unit
- SCIM fellow follows SCI pts only and serves as “pretending” to PMR residents, usually assigned to work with SCI board certified attending physician





# Harborview Medical Center, Outpatient SCI

- Acute SCI consults: Gen rehab consult service, SCIM fellow sees SCI pts only
  - 4-5 new injuries per week with follow-up on prior pts = following 8-10 pts at a time
  - ~125 new cervical spine SCI per year
- Outpatient SCI: SCI Clinics (SCI care and interventional spasticity management)



# VA Puget Sound – Outpatient SCI

## VA SCI Clinic

SCI-specific issues, general  
primary care for Vets with SCI

ALS Clinic with Rehab Care Service  
(PMR physicians)

MS Clinic with Rehab Care Service

Neuro-Urology Clinic (2-4 days per  
year)

Wound Care Clinic (2-4 days per  
year)

Consultation on Vets in MICU, SICU,  
Gen Med/Surg wards





# VA Puget Sound – Inpatient SCI

- 38-bed SCI unit (current reduced census due to nurse staffing)
- Life-long care. Historically:
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  (on average) pts receiving acute/subacute rehab
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  pts receiving medical care (acute medical issues, vent weaning, urologic issues, fracture management)
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  pts receiving wound care (conservative healing, post-flap healing)
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  pts completing annual evaluations or therapy related admissions
  - Due to COVID and nurse staffing limitation,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inpts are receiving acute/subacute rehab
- Patient population: Older male Veteran, medically/psychosocially complex, 50% traumatic/50% non-traumatic SCI



# Ventilator Management

- VA Inpatient:
  - 3 ventilators/respiratory high-risk beds
  - 2-3 Vets weaned from vents per year; no diaphragm pacers (yet!)
- HMC:
  - Inpt 2 vent beds typically pts with SCI
  - Inpt ~5 vent weans per year
  - Consults: lots of experience collaborating as consultant on resp issues, including vent weaning
- Current fellow comments: Inpatient rehab vent numbers are probably not too far off from elsewhere besides the really dedicated standalone... You definitely see a lot on HMC consults too, and we have good infrastructure and faculty to teach vent management. I have 20+ pts on the list of vented patients I've provided."



# Injections/Intrathecal Baclofen

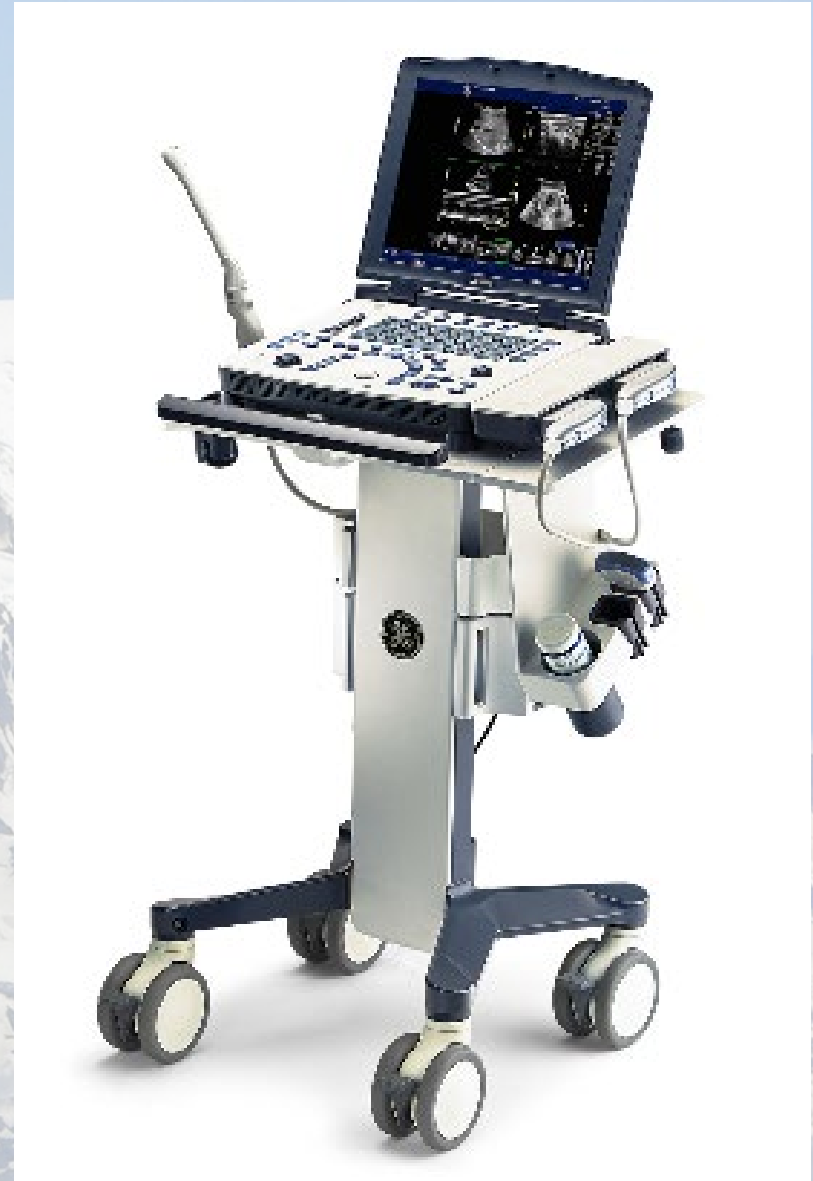
- Hands-on ITB and injections at UW/HMC Clinics
- Small number of Vets with ITB
- ~50 procedures per year (somewhat dependent on fellow interest)
- Opportunities to participate in ultrasound labs alongside PMR residents





# Ultrasound

- Ultrasound available for use on VA SCI rotations
- Exploring creative ways to integrate ultrasound into clinical care





# SCI Fellow Didactics

- Weekly Friday noontime didactics
- Delivered by clinicians 3 weeks/mon
  - Directed at level of SCIM Fellows, but PMR residents and interdisciplinary colleagues regularly attend
- Delivered by SCIM fellow 1 week/mon
  - Directed at level of PMR resident
  - Opportunity to advance presentation skills and have a “tried and true” presentation for job interviews



# Example of SCI Didactics Lecture Schedule

Month	Day	Topic
January	7 <sup>th</sup>	Spinal cord tumors
	14 <sup>th</sup>	Inflammation in SCI
	21 <sup>st</sup>	Driver's rehab
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Resident Lecture
February	4 <sup>th</sup>	Stem cell therapies
	11 <sup>th</sup>	Acute SCI evaluation
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Acid/base disorders
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Resident Lecture
March	4 <sup>th</sup>	MSK US in SCI Practice
	11 <sup>th</sup>	MS
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Surgical management of syrinx, HCP and tethered SC
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Resident Lecture
April	1 <sup>st</sup>	Imaging of the spine: post-surgical changes
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Hereditary/congenital
	15 <sup>th</sup>	Polio/Post-Polio
	22 <sup>nd</sup>	TBI and SCI
	29 <sup>th</sup>	Pregnancy After SCI
May	6 <sup>th</sup>	Surgical Management of SCI Bowel & Bladder
	13 <sup>th</sup>	OSA equipment, CPAP
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Robotics or e-stim
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Resident lecture



# Additional Didactic Lectures

- Weekly SCI Urology Rounds with Neuro-Urologist (Harborview Chief of Urology Service)
- Bi-weekly Neuroradiology/Neurosurgery Rounds
- Regular “recheck” sessions (1-2 times per month) led by PT/OT
- Monthly SCI QI meeting (SCI Med fellows invited)
- Opportunities to participate in annual/ or “one-off” sessions:
  - UW GME Quality Improvement and Patient Safety course
  - UW GME Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity course



# Academic opportunities

- Teaching: Beside teaching, SCI Med fellow didactics, PMR resident Neurorehab course, med student small group SCI discussion, UW PMR review course, NW SCI Forum consumer education
- QI projects
  - E-ISNCSCI exam
  - SCI inpt/outpt satisfaction survey
  - Discharge satisfaction survey
  - Virtual annual evaluation satisfaction survey
  - Colonoscopy preparation in Vets with SCI
  - Subacute vs acute rehabilitation in Vets with SCI
- Opportunities for state-level policy advocacy through Washington State Medical Association (free for PMR residents and fellows to join); fellows are encouraged to become involved with PMR/SCI organizations (AAPMR, ASCIP)
- Self-study/review: Boards preparation



# Academic opportunities – clinical research

- Subacute vs acute level rehab in Vets with SCI – ASCIP presentation
- Lower limb loss in SCI – ASCIP poster, publication
- Transition from MWC to PWC – ASCIP poster
- Colonoscopy prep in SCI – ASCIP presentation, 2 publications
- Outcomes of flap surgery in SCI – ASCIP presentation, publication
- Late ventilatory failure in Veterans with SCI – ASCIP poster 2021 (best poster by trainee award!)
- COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough in Veterans with SCI – ASIA presentation 2021, publication
- Current and Projected Workforce of Spinal Cord Injury Medicine Physicians Through 2040, publication
- Vital sign differences between septic patients with tetraplegia and paraplegia, publication
- Adaptive curling: sweeping away barriers, publication
- IVC Filter Extravasation – ASCIP poster, case report
- ITB catheter complications project – ongoing, poster in development



# Diversity of SCIM physician academic activities

- >100 peer reviewed publications by SCI physician staff (mostly by S. Burns!)
- All SCI physicians involved with fellow and resident teaching
- Active involvement with:
  - UW PMR residency committees
  - VA hospital committees
  - UW/HMC hospital committees
  - ASCIP/APS leadership
  - ASIA leadership
  - ABPMR committees and examinations
  - ACGME committees
  - CARF



# Adaptive Sporting

- VA SCI actively involved with adaptive sporting
  - Handcycles, rugby chairs, tennis chairs
  - Pool on-site at VA with pool therapy, kayaking
  - Recreation therapy organizes adaptive curling and fencing clinics
- Seattle has a strong adaptive sporting presence
  - Seattle Slam wheelchair rugby team
  - Wheelchair basketball teams in Seattle and Tacoma
  - Power soccer
  - Sled hockey team
  - Footloose sailing
  - Seattle Adaptive Sports: <http://www.seattleadaptivesports.org/>
  - Outdoors for All: <https://outdoorsforall.org/>



# Inclusion and Diversity

- Actively exploring opportunities for SCIM fellow involvement with diversity issues.
- Ideas include:
  - Career day presentations at local middle and high schools
  - Participation in lectures offered by UW Center for Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (CEDI) and Center for Leadership and Innovation in Medical Education (CLIME)
  - Participation with Network of Underrepresented Residents and Fellows (NURF) - Doctor for a Day Program
    - Outreach pipeline program whose mission is to expose, inspire and cultivate under-represented middle and high school students of color to enter careers in healthcare





# Mentorship

- Regular formal and informal meetings with SCI Medicine Fellowship Director
- Informal guidance from all SCI attending staff
  - From former fellow: “Personally had multiple UW attendings reach out on my behalf, gave me connections”
- Strength – large nationwide network of UW fellowship graduates is helpful for academic and career opportunities!



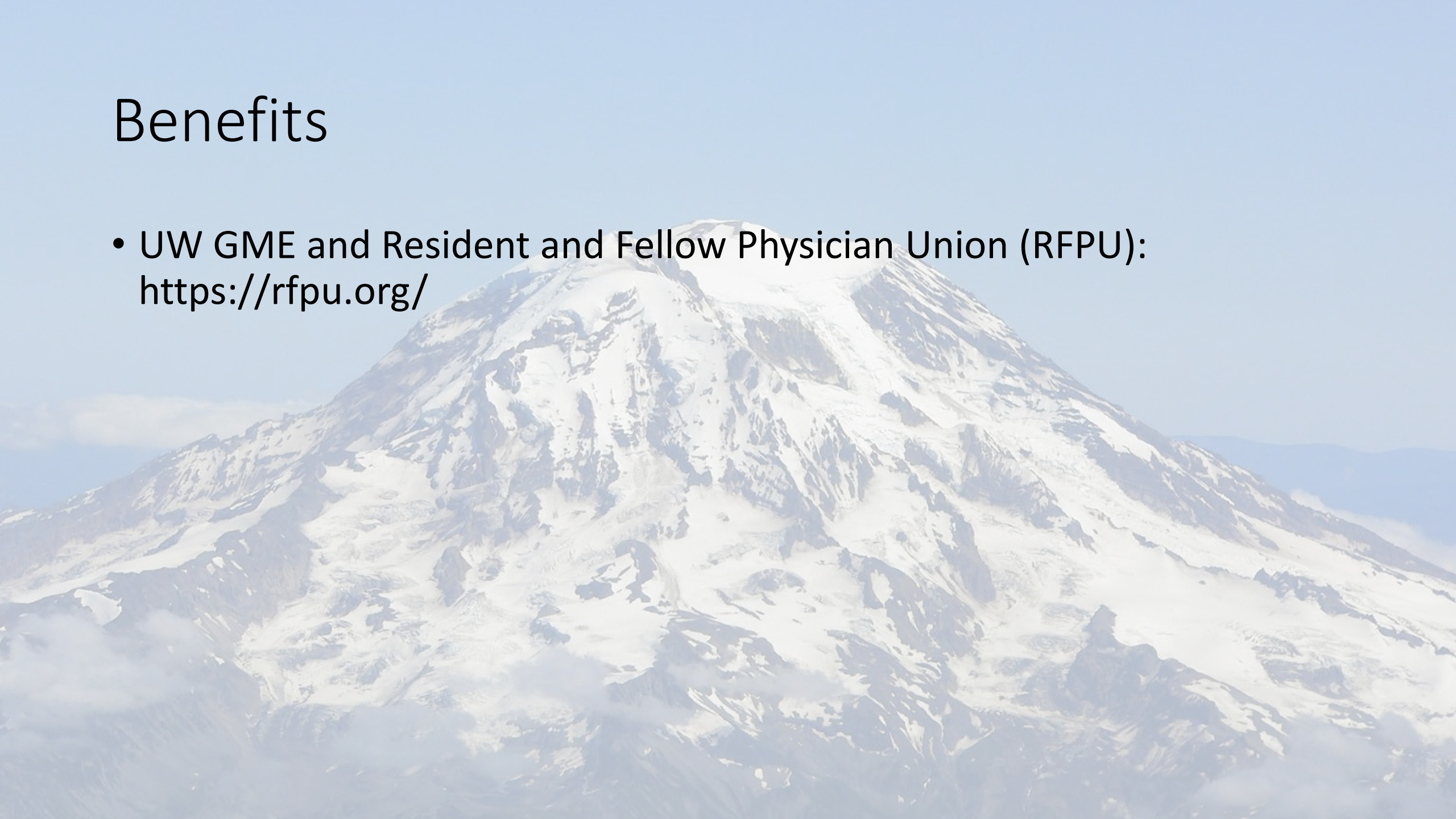
# COVID-19 impact on fellowship training

- Initially (2020-2021), patient volume reduced, but now back to baseline
- Transition to virtual clinical care
  - While some experience with virtual visits is useful, most value remains with face-to-face visits and these are prioritized with fellows
- SCIM fellow didactics have been virtual, and may continue to remain virtual
  - Allows for fellow at UW or HMC to participate consistently



# Benefits

- UW GME and Resident and Fellow Physician Union (RFPU):  
<https://rfpu.org/>





# Leave and salary

- Leave\*:
  - 20 weekday vacation days
  - 17 sick leave days
  - 10 professional leave days (interviews, board exams, conferences)
  - 1 personal day per calendar year
- Salary: PGY-5 (2024-2025): \$87,960
- Professional development funds: \$450
- Travel: \$1000

\*SCIM Fellows are subject to ABPMR limit of 30 workdays away from training (exclusive of conference days)



# Potentially perceived weaknesses

- Less procedurally focused fellowship – we don't a high volume of injections, ultrasound evaluations, or baclofen pump management
- Few ventilator management opportunities
- Few pediatric SCI opportunities
  - Peds seen at SCH – Spina Bifida clinic 2-4 days per year
  - Peds occasionally seen in consult at HMC
  - UW Transitions Clinic – moves peds from SCH into UW adult system
- Facilities are vintage and cozy (aka old and cramped)



# Strengths

- Patient experience: Exposure to a diverse patient population across 4 institutions from very acute to very chronic SCI
- Large number of SCIM board certified faculty with varied academic and administrative interests
- Relative flexibility in the fellowship schedule to accommodate to fellow-specific interests
- Committed interdisciplinary teams with SCI-specific skill sets
- SCIM fellow didactics



We are most proud...

...of the successes of our UW SCI Medicine fellowship graduates





# SCIM Fellowship Positions

- 2 SCIM fellowship positions
  - One position funded by UW
  - One position funded by Craig H. Neilsen Foundation
  - There are no differences in the clinical experience or salary/benefits between the two fellows
- We have been successful in consistently filling both fellowship positions since expanding to two fellows in 2015



# SCIM Fellow Board Certification

- The majority of SCIM fellows take ABPMR SCIM board certification exam within 2 years of completing fellowship
- Fellows have successfully passed board certification exam





# Where do UW grads go?

Most graduates dedicate >50% of time (if not 100%!) to SCI  
Most remain in academic institutions





# SCIM Fellowship Interviews for Academic Year 2025-2026

- All SCIM fellowship interviews in 2024 for fellowship positions in academic year 2025-2026 will be offered in a virtual format
- J. Svircev MD SCIM fellowship director speaks with each applicant before scheduling an “official” virtual interview
- Interviews will be scheduled beginning June
- Interviews are generally on Fridays and for 2-3 hours
- UW SCIM Fellowship participates in The Match with NRMP



# Match Dates for 2025-2026

- Match Opens: August 7, 2024
- Ranking Opens: September 4, 2024
- Ranking Opens: October 9, 2024
- Match Day: October 23, 2024