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Personal Statement

This is a unique time to be in pain medicine. The pandemic has triggered an increase in chronic pain as our patients find themselves stuck at home - cut off from social support networks, coping strategies, and treatment teams. We've seen a massive spike in opioid overdoses and deaths. Depression and anxiety continue to rise, and calls to suicide hotlines are up 8000%. Healthcare has largely gone virtual, changing both treatment and outcomes. And conferences – opportunities to learn, get support, and meet like minds – have gone online, too. There's never been a more critical time for an organization like USASP to flourish and grow. The time to come together, unify our disciplines, and help people in pain is NOW.

As a pain psychologist, it hasn't been easy to find a professional home. Pain medicine is fractured, and our various disciplines are siloed. It is rare for physicians, scientists, psychologists, physical therapists and other disciplines to all get a seat at the table. One of my primary goals is to bridge the gaps between medicine and psychology, research and practice. USASP prioritizes all disciplines, giving us all equal weight and voice, in order to effect change. As such, it is my goal to support USASP's growth and development as a member of the board, Behavioral and Social Sciences seat 3.

I have significant leadership experience and currently serve on USASP's Coalition and Advocacy Building Committee. For 5 years I've served on the board of the American Association of Pain Psychology, where I founded the Pediatric Division and established AAPP's first pediatric pain conference. I also serve on the board of directors for the Society of Pediatric Pain Medicine as Psychology Liaison, the first psychologist in a leadership position on a previously all-anesthesiologist board. To bring biopsychosocial pain medicine to the medical community, I also teach pain science and psychology at UCSF, Dartmouth, and Stanford for residents, fellows, and faculty. My UCSF colleagues and I have gathered data over multiple years of trainings, and recently published our work: unsurprisingly, changing pain education has a massive impact on how physicians treat pain. Multidisciplinary collaboration is critical, and it works.

As someone who has lived with chronic pain, I am also a passionate patient advocate and knowledge-disseminator. I write affordable, accessible books on biobehavioral treatments for chronic pain, including the first published workbook for children in pain, and author the Psychology Today column "Pain, Explained," which translates pain science and research for the lay public. These efforts resulted in the great honor of being awarded the 2020-21 Mayday Fellowship.

To the USASP board, I bring my educational and advocacy work, my passion for connecting those who care, and my drive to change the way we treat pain.