

# Merna Naji, MD

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## Education and Appointments

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<b>Assistant Clinical Professor:</b> <i>Department of Anesthesiology - Pain Medicine</i> (primary appointment) <i>Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation</i> (secondary appointment) University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA	2024 - ongoing
<b>Fellowship: Interventional Pain Medicine - Chief Fellow</b> University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA	2023 - 2024
<b>Residency: Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation</b> University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA	2020 - 2023
<b>Intern year: Internal Medicine</b> University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA	2019 - 2020
<b>Doctor of Medicine</b> University of Toledo College of Medicine, Toledo, OH	2015 - 2019
<b>Bachelor of Science</b> , Biology, Chemistry University of Toledo, Toledo, OH	2012 - 2015

## Research, Publications, and Presentations

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<b>Book chapter:</b> <i>Responsible Controlled Substance Prescribing</i> - Published in: <i>Advanced Pharmacology For Prescribers 2e</i>	2026
<b>Poster: Successful Basivertebral Nerve Ablation for Refractory Chronic Low Back Pain</b> University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA - <i>American Academy of Pain Medicine</i>	2026
<b>Study, co-investigator:</b> EXPLORER Total Body PET/CT Imaging for Myofascial Pain. IRB approved clinical trial. Ongoing.	2025

University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Publication (upcoming):** Enhancing Pain Fellowship Training Integrative Collaborative In-House Cadaver Labs for Advanced Procedural Skill Development. Status: pending submission. 2025  
University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Study, co-investigator:** Cannabis for back pain management. In collaboration with the departments of neurosurgery and orthopedic surgery. Status: ongoing. 2025  
University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Lecture to Pain fellows:** A Guide to Chronic Pelvic Pain 2025  
University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Lecture to PM&R residents:** Common Spine Diagnoses and Treatments 2025  
University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Journal club:** Stratification of patients based on the Neuropathic Pain Symptom Inventory: development and validation of a new algorithm 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Quality improvement:** Summarizing the CDC Clinical Practice Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Pain (2022) and the HHS Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force Report (2019) in a short-hand and digestible format for reference for all fellows and faculty. 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Morbidity and Mortality Conference:** Large hematoma requiring decompressive laminectomy in a patient who restarted warfarin on the same day of a cervical epidural steroid injection. 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Journal club:** Selective Inhibition of NaV1.8 with VX-548 for Acute Pain 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Journal club:** Botulinum toxin for the treatment of neuropathic pain 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Case report:** Intradiscal Intrasacation of Supraneural Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection 2023  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA  
- *American Academy of Pain Medicine Annual Meeting; Scottsdale, AZ*

**Grand Rounds:** Sacroiliac Joint Fusion - Current Evidence. 2023  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Journal club:** Dorsal root ganglion stimulation yielded higher treatment success rate for complex regional pain syndrome and causalgia at 3 and 12 months: a randomized comparative trial. 2023  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Published textbook chapters:** *The Pain Procedure Handbook* 2023

- Authored and illustrated multiple chapters, including: Caudal Epidural Steroid Injection with Ultrasound, Sacroiliac Joint Bipolar Radiofrequency Ablation, Superior Hypogastric Plexus Block, and Ganglion Impar Block.
  - Published in *The Pain Procedure Handbook*. Springer.
- Published textbook chapter:** Measuring Outcomes in Spinal Decompression (Naji M, MD; Engle A, MD) 2023
- Published in *Spinal Decompression Techniques*. Elsevier.
- Grand Rounds:** A Physiatrist's Approach to Pelvic Pain. 2022  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA
- Case report:** Successful rehabilitation of a multivisceral transplant recipient University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA 2022
- *Association of Academic Physiatrists Annual Meeting*; New Orleans, LA
- Case report:** A unique Maisonneuve fracture pattern: midshaft fibular fracture with associated syndesmotic and deltoid ligament tears in a floor hockey player. 2022
- *Association of Academic Physiatrists Annual Meeting*; New Orleans, LA
- Presentation:** Hot Topics in Physiatry Education (Co-authors: Kuntal Chowdhary, MD and April Hyon, MD) 2022
- A round-table discussion aimed to improve residency education by fostering creative thinking to address gaps in "Hot Topic" curricula.
  - *Association of Academic Physiatrists Annual Meeting*; New Orleans, LA.
- Case report:** An unusual case of tracheal stenosis in a COVID-19 patient on the inpatient rehabilitation unit University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA 2021
- *American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Annual Assembly*; Nashville, TN.
- Quality improvement:** Improving preclinical medical student disability education 2021  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA
- Provided the medical students at UPMC with a thorough and early exposure to working with patients with disabilities. Its goals included educating young doctors on the importance of identifying barriers to accessibility and using function-oriented language.
- Journal Club:** Outcome Disparities in Inpatient Rehabilitation University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA 2020
- Phone application:** iMHere University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA 2020
- I contributed to the design and development of a medical phone application designed to deliver rehabilitation interventions to individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and spinal cord injury.
- Journal publication:** Stanton, A., Naji, M., Mugge, L., Mitro, G., & Gohara, A. F. (2018). Monocytes Contribute to High Renal Allograft Rejection Rates when 2018

Alemtuzumab is Utilized as an Induction Agent: A Retrospective Study. *Journal of Clinical Experimental Transplantation*, 3, 122.

**Journal publication: Naji, M.,** Stanton, A. D., Ekwenna, O., Mitro, G., Rees, M., & Ortiz, J. (2017). Alemtuzumab Equalizes Short-Term Outcomes in High-Risk PRA Patients: Long-Term Outcomes Suffer. *Journal of Clinical Experimental Transplantation*, 2(2). 2017

**Journal publication: Malathi, K.,** Siddiqui, M. A., Dayal, S., **Naji, M.,** Ezelle, H. J., Zeng, C., ... & Hassel, B. A. (2014). RNase L interacts with Filamin A to regulate actin dynamics and barrier function for viral entry. *MBio*, 5(6), e02012-14. 2014

## Leadership

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**Principal member: Perioperative Spine Pain Task Force** 2025  
As part of this initiative, I have played a central role in drafting a comprehensive proposal outlining standardized guidelines for perioperative opioid prescribing, multimodal pain management strategies, and enhanced recovery protocols.  
University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

**Chief Pain Medicine Fellow** 2023 - 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Street Medicine Founder** 2021 - 2024  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA  
- I founded the first-ever PM&R-focused Street Medicine group at UPMC. We go on weekly rounds down streets and alleyways to provide supplies and basic medical care to those experiencing homelessness.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** 2019 - 2023  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Wellness Committee** 2019 - 2023  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Physicians for Human Rights Committee** 2015 - 2018  
University of Toledo College of Medicine, Toledo, OH  
- I helped organize numerous fundraisers and educational round tables for the community. I specifically spearheaded a charity event that raised over \$4,000 for local Toledo immigrants and refugees.

**Honors College Lecture Series Committee** 2014-2016  
University of Toledo College of Medicine, Toledo, OH  
- As a part of the committee, I organized events where distinguished speakers came to the college and proceeds went to cultivating opportunities for the students at the University of Toledo.

## President and Founder: French Club

University of Toledo and University of Toledo College of Medicine, Toledo, OH

2013-2019

## Awards

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### Diamond Doc Awards

2025

FY25 Q2, Q3, Q4: This award recognizes UCD physicians who consistently receive high scores (90th percentile or higher) on patient surveys, demonstrating careful listening, clear explanations, and respectful partnerships.

University of California Davis, Sacramento, CA

### Presidential Scholarship

2012-2016

University of Toledo and University of Toledo College of Medicine, Toledo, OH

- I received one of four merit-based tuition, fee, room and board scholarships awarded in my incoming class of approximately 5,000 students

### Hultz Prize Finalist

2015

University of Toledo, Toledo, OH

- World's largest student competition for social good. Students compete for \$1 million dollars to tackle problems including food security and education.

### Ariss Family Medicine Scholarship

2014

University of Toledo, Toledo, OH

## Exams and Board Certifications

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California Fluoroscopy Supervisor and Operator Permit  
Pass: no percentiles provided

2025

The American Board of Anesthesiology Pain Medicine  
Pass: **97th percentile**

2024

American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Part 2  
Pass: no percentiles provided

2024

American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Part 1  
Pass: **95th percentile**

2023