Get to know Dr. James McDeavitt, the new Chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, in this Q and A.

How did you get into the field of PM&R?
Actually, I did not know the specialty even existed until late in my third year of medical school. However, I did have some personal experience. In high school and college I used to be a rock-climber. During my sophomore year of college, one of my best friends was involved in a climbing accident: he fell about 70 feet, broke his back, crushed his ankles and was paralyzed.

Over the next year, I spent a lot of time visiting him at our local rehabilitation hospital. I got to know the staff, and saw patients and families working hard to deal with catastrophic injuries. I liked the environment, so when I learned it was actually a career option, I was hooked.

Incidentally, my friend had a great recovery.

What are your clinical and research interests?
I have served in a variety of clinical roles throughout my career. My primary focus, and first love, has always been the care of people with acquired brain injury. At various times, I also ran an orthotics and prosthetics clinic, and for about three years saw exclusively children.

Given the tremendous strengths of Baylor, I have interest in building research programs that leverage our institutional expertise in genomics and functional neuroimaging. I also have an interest in educational research.

What is your vision for the PM&R department?
We will be the dominant academic PM&R program nationally. It sounds audacious to say out loud, and at most places it would be. At Baylor, it is a realistic and achievable goal.

How do you like Houston so far?
We love it. After only two months, we have settled in, and are enjoying everything Houston has to offer: great restaurants, a vibrant cultural scene. I do not think most of the country realizes what a sophisticated city this is.

What is your favorite thing about Baylor College of Medicine so far?
I really have two favorite things, but they are related. First, I am incredibly impressed by the quality of our Baylor physicians; they are truly world class. Second, I know Baylor has been through some
STUDENT CORNER
Beverly Patuwo
Third-year medical student

Through her extracurricular activities, third-year medical student Beverly Patuwo is making sure her passion for both pediatrics and global health has an impact locally and beyond. Patuwo completed her undergraduate studies in sociology and global health technologies at Rice University and plans to pursue a residency in pediatrics.

The native Houstonian was recently selected as the District VII representative for the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Section on Medical Students, Residents and Fellowship Trainees for five states in the Southern United States. In this role, she will attend a planning meeting in Chicago to help organize the 2014 national conference, to be held in San Diego in October, work to increase membership among students and residents and help create more effective communication between all pediatric interest groups within the district.

As a member of the Baylor Pediatric Student Association, she has helped coordinate the Texas Children’s Hospital Annual Mobile Clinic Vaccine Drive for the past two years. The event covers more than 20 locations throughout the greater Houston area.

Through the Christian Medical Dental Association’s Global Health Outreach program, Patuwo traveled to Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic where she and other volunteers worked to set up a medical and dental clinic for more than 3,000 patients.

Beginning this July, she will pursue her master’s in public health in behavioral science and health promotion through Baylor’s dual degree program with the University of Texas School of Public Health. She then hopes to complete the Diploma in Tropical Medicine through Baylor’s National School of Tropical Medicine and pursue medical and orphanage work in East Asia.

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difficult times over the past several years. There is an old saying that “adversity doesn’t build character, it reveals it.” Perhaps as result of adversity, the people who are here today are clearly mission driven and here because they want to do good and noble work. For those of us who are new, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for those of you who kept the flame alive during some difficult times.

Tell us about your family
I have been married to my wife, Mary, for almost 28 years. She was born in Latin America to an American father and Colombian mother, and until recently worked as a Spanish-language medical interpreter. My oldest daughter, Kathleen, is a second-year medical student at UNC Chapel Hill; Grace graduates from Wake Forest in May and is engaged to be married. We also have two boxers, Bella and Henry.

Most people wouldn’t know that I …
Was on a kid’s variety TV show from age 14 to 16, doing sketch comedy and features. It was awful. Thankfully, all copies have been destroyed.

Anything else you want to add?
Not a day goes by that I am not both humbled and grateful to be here.