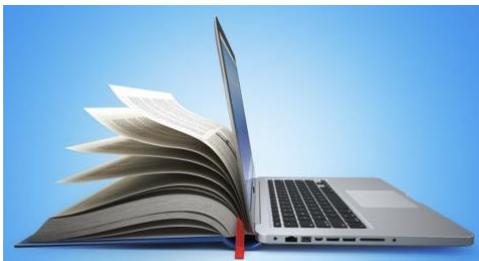


# July 2022 Newsletter



## Welcome to the Team, Mark!

We are delighted to introduce you to Mark Gilliland, ACP's newest Program Manager! Mark joined the ACP team in June and brings with him a background in data analytics, data visualization and automation solutions. We, at ACP, believe that research is the only way to greatly improve the outlook for people with MS and one day find a cure. Data collection, curation and sharing are key in the research process. The [ACP Repository](#) and [iConquerMS](#) are important tools for obtaining the necessary data to understand not only the causes of MS, but also the full scope of impact the disease has on those living with it. Mark's expertise will be instrumental in managing the wealth of existing data in these databases, developing data collection mechanisms for new studies through iConquerMS and many other essential tasks.



Mark has six years of experience as a data professional. He primarily worked in public education alongside teachers and administrators, giving them access to academic data to allow them to make informed decisions about their instructional programs. He played an instrumental role in the transition to remote learning within his school system at the beginning of the pandemic by

building automated systems to deliver curriculum and resources directly to students and track attendance. Mark also provided data analytics consulting services to a performing arts organization. He examined social media data to help them understand their audience and develop marketing strategies for a feature film. When asked what he enjoys most about being a data professional, Mark shares, “I enjoy seeing the impact that my work has on organizations. As a data professional, you can often see very quickly how the work you are doing is influencing and changing programs, strategies and actions. Being able to support non-profits is also something I find incredibly rewarding.”

Mark was born and raised in California and currently lives in Los Angeles. He attended the University of California Santa Cruz, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. He is bilingual through self-study. In his words, “I speak Spanish fluently, initially taking classes in high school and practicing speaking with coworkers in Los Angeles, as well as from many trips to Mexico and Spain, reading books (starting with children’s books and eventually graduating to novels), watching movies, listening to music, and making friends that speak Spanish... I would love to learn another language and have started studying Portuguese.”



When not at work, Mark enjoys being outdoors and staying fit. His favorite leisure activities include hiking, mountain biking, yoga, working out at the gym and going to the beach. He recently completed his open water diving certification and has completed several ocean dives and [Cenote](#) dives off the Yucatán peninsula in Mexico. Mark loves to travel. In his words, “My favorite destination so far has to be

Japan. Everything that I ate while there was so incredibly delicious. The day I arrived in Japan, my phone decided to stop working, so I ended up having an old-school style trip exploring the country completely disconnected. I bought a [Casio watch](#), a little notebook and pen, and some maps. It was amazing and very different from my usual trips where I always have [Google Maps](#), [Uber](#), [Whatsapp](#), etc.... One of my favorite things to do in Tokyo was to buy a day pass for the train and get off at random stations, walking in random directions and discovering interesting business, restaurants, and local sights, then getting back on the train and doing it again at the next stop.”

Mark has a close friend that was diagnosed with MS several years ago. He first learned about ACP from the job posting for his current position. When asked what he finds most inspiring about ACP's mission, Mark shares, "The focus on empowering patients and people by putting them at the center of the work, collaborating with them to build studies, programs, and systems...I am hopeful that my data skills will help to support the experts we work with and the patients we support to be more effective and efficient with how we use data to develop programs, studies, and initiatives."



ACP was recently awarded funding for a project that involves mapping out the "MS patient journey" in order to more effectively engage them in research. Mark will be managing the development of this activity. The needs and priorities of a person living with MS change throughout their MS journey and are affected by many factors. Most outreach efforts for research are developed as "one size fits all" and, as a result, may fail to resonate with some individuals. Meeting a person where they are in their journey with the disease and providing them with tailored information about research participation is likely to be more effective at increasing research participation. Working in collaboration with people affected by MS and other collaborators, Mark will help map the MS patient journey, focusing on research-related needs and interests and how they evolve, and also considering other factors such as age, gender, race and ethnicity. The team will then develop resources to engage people affected by MS in research based on where they are in their journey.

According to John Maxwell, "Teams are incredible things. No task is too great, no accomplishment too grand, no dream too far-fetched for a team. It takes teamwork to make the dream work." We are excited to have Mark join the ACP team, lending his expertise and insight in ACP's activities and look forward to what we will accomplish as we collaborate with people living with MS, researchers, healthcare providers, and other advocacy organizations (among others) and work together to accelerate MS research toward better ways to diagnose, treat and eventually cure the disease. Stay tuned!

