It has been a busy few months for pediatricians in the Alabama Chapter! Our recent Spring Meeting at the Lodge at Gulf State Park was not only a celebration of our collective dedication to pediatric care, but also an opportunity to engage in vital discussions and learning experiences.

One of the standout moments from our meeting was the interactive tabletop exercise on disaster preparedness. Led by experts in the field, this exercise provided us with invaluable insights into handling community disasters efficiently through collaboration. In addition, we learned from esteemed speakers covering a diverse range of topics, from neonatal abstinence and withdrawal to the effective public messaging of vaccinations.

But it wasn’t all work and no play! We also indulged in a bit of fun with sandcastle building and another successful Grand Pediatric Pentathlon benefitting Reach Out and Read, fostering camaraderie and relaxation amid our busy schedules.

Beyond our meeting, I am proud to share some significant achievements from the recently concluded Alabama Legislative session. Several bills that would have posed dangers to Alabama children and barriers for pediatricians did not pass, including changes to immunization consent and exemption policies and a bill to expand the scope of practice of lay midwives to care for newborns through the age of six weeks. On the other hand, great momentum was achieved on a bill aimed at updating Alabama’s Child Passenger Safety

Register now for 2024 Annual Meeting and new pre-conference Leadership & Management Workshop: “Visioning for Tomorrow’s Pediatric Practice”

September 13-15 at Ross Bridge Resort, Birmingham

Online registration is open for this year’s Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update, which will be held at the Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Resort September 13 -15, 2024! This year, the Chapter used feedback from a newly formed practice management committee to develop our first ever “Leadership & Management Workshop: Visioning for Tomorrow’s Pediatric Practice,” which will be held as a pre-conference workshop on Friday, September 13.

“Unlike our previous practice management workshops, this year’s offering is a broader approach with targeted education for pediatric practice owners,” said Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Chapter Practice Management Chair, who will serve as one of the faculty. “Our focus is on building leadership skills to provide vision and goals for their practices.”

For a full look at the new workshop, which will include separate afternoon tracks for pediatricians and practice managers/staff, see page 4.

Of course, the main Annual Meeting will provide top-notch clinical education for our members, offering 10.5 educational hours. Topics include:
- Addressing Youth Tobacco Use from a Provider Perspective
- Pediatric Spine Conditions: Challenges in Diagnosis and Management

Nominate a pediatrician for Chapter awards

Now is the time to nominate colleagues for the Carden Johnston Leadership, the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy and the Early Career Pediatrician awards. To nominate an Alabama Chapter member pediatrician, visit: https://www.alaap.org/nominateapediatrician
law. Though time constraints prevented its passage this year, we are confident that with bipartisan support, we will see this crucial update next year.

These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our Chapter lobbyist, our partners, and each of you, our members. Your efforts in building relationships with stakeholders in your communities are instrumental in shaping policies that promote the health and well-being of Alabama’s children.

Our next opportunity to gather and celebrate one another will be the 2024 Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update, set for September 13-15, 2024 at the Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort. As we look ahead, let us continue to stand united in our mission to advocate for the best interests of children and pediatricians across our state. Together, we can achieve even greater milestones and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

2024 Annual Meeting continued from page 1

- Quick Tips on Incorporating a Sexual History into Your Visit
- STI Testing, Treatment and Prep in Teenagers in General Practice
- Locking Arms: Empowering Pediatricians to Advocate for Secure Firearm Storage
- The Role(s) of Pediatricians in Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Oral Health in Special Needs Populations: An Overview for Medical Providers
- Antimicrobial Stewardship in Primary Care: The “WHY?”
- Oral Health and the Pregnant Patient: The Role of Medical and Dental Healthcare Providers
- Antimicrobial Stewardship in Primary Care: The “HOW”

The meeting will also include our annual Awards Dinner, sponsored by Children’s of Alabama. Register now on the Chapter website at alaap.org!

Second quarter 2024 update from the Chapter Mental Health Committee

By Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, Chair

The Mental Health Committee continues to have conversations with the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) and Commissioner Kim Boswell. In the last update, we reported that we met with the executive directors of the Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) in the state to discuss sharing of patient health information. It was reported to us that interpretations of regulations in place have prohibited CMHCs from sharing patient health information with referring providers in the past.

We reached out to Legal Counsel with the Medical Association of the State of Alabama (MASA), requesting clarification that the sharing of patient health information (including diagnoses, medication, and treatment plans) with involved medical providers is permissible under HIPAA. We then shared this letter with ADMH and have since had fruitful conversations.

I remain hopeful that we will soon have effective two-way communication between pediatricians and your local CMHC in the care of your patients. Our hope is that once this happens, we are then able to expand this to all behavioral health specialists in Alabama.

In the interim, if you refer any patient to a behavior health specialist, please ask the patient to sign a release for records and ask that documentation of the visit be sent to you. This can help ensure that you are aware of the treatment plan and be able to take care of the whole patient.
2024 Legislative Session recap

The Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature ended on May 9, with mostly good news for pediatrics! The Alabama Chapter-AAP leadership and lobbying team worked steadily to promote legislation that positively affects children and to oppose those bills that do not. Here are the outcomes from the Chapter’s perspective:

• Thankfully, no bills moved through the process that would have placed barriers on access to vaccines for children and adolescents, although there were several that were introduced that would have done so.
  • A bill that would have made religious exemptions much easier to declare by circumventing the local health departments did not make it out of the House, although it did make it through the Senate. The Chapter voiced its concern loudly and is appreciative of those members who contacted their legislators about this bill.
  • The bill that required parental consent for administration of all vaccines made its way through the House this year, but did not pass the Senate. Similarly, pediatricians from throughout the state were very helpful in getting the word out to legislators about the concerns regarding adolescent visits.
• Another bill the Chapter opposed that would have raised the age of medical consent from 14 to 19 did not make it, even to the first step (committee) in the process.
• A bill that restructures the State Committee on Public Health passed, with an overwhelming majority of physician seats remaining on the committee, however, the Chapter leadership was disappointed to hear that legislators chose to remove a representative slot for our organization from the committee’s make-up. We will, however, be working with the Medical Association to assure that pediatricians will have a voice through MASA’s seats on the committee.
  • In the last issue of *The Alabama Pediatrician*, we shared that the Chapter joined a group of advocacy and child health organizations to educate legislators about the need for a stronger child passenger safety law; we were delighted to find a true champion in Representative Ron Bolton of Tuscaloosa:
  • Through Rep. Bolton’s leadership, a strengthened child passenger safety law proposal, which included every current national recommendation, was drafted, introduced and made its way through the House (unanimous) and the Senate Committee.
  • Unfortunately, on the last day, time ran out in the Senate before the bill made it up for a vote, although it was on the agenda for consideration.
  • Next year, the Chapter and our fellow organizational partners will be working proactively with Rep. Bolton, who will be introducing it again early in the session.
• The Chapter and the AAFP met with the legislature’s rural caucus to drum up support for the rural tax credit revision bill to be heard in Committee. In addition, the two organizations secured many members’ signatures on a sign-on letter to encourage the bill through the legislative process, but we did not get the legislative support needed to move it forward. The bill, which was worked on by the Medical Association, would have made significant improvements to the current law.
• The Chapter leadership was excited to learn of the passage of legislation that paved the way for a $15 million state appropriation for Summer EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer), which provides eligible children $40 per summer month to purchase food using an EBT card.
AL-AAP/PMA Leadership & Management Workshop
Visioning for Tomorrow's Pediatric Practice

September 13, 2024
Ross Bridge Resort, Birmingham

Joint Morning Track
Communicate to Cultivate: Shaping Your Practice Culture
Designing an Employee Benefits Package
Accounting Primer for Pediatric Practices

Afternoon Tracks
Pediatricians
Your Culture, Your Legacy. Success Beyond Comfort
Hacks for Pediatric Practice Owners
Tactical Bootcamp for Pediatric CEOs

Practice Managers/Staff
Empowering the Leader Within You:
Strategies for Pediatric Practice Managers
Medical Practice Manager’s Guide to Understanding Healthcare Law
Hacks for Pediatric Practice Managers

Speakers
Suzanne Berman, MD, FAAP,
Managing Partner, Plateau Pediatrics,
Crossville, TN

Brandy Boone, JD, General Counsel,
Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Montgomery, AL

Andrea Lewis, PHR, SHRM-CP,
CEO/Senior Consultant, Human Capital Services, Birmingham, AL

Maggie Norton, Owner & Founder,
RepattEARN LLC, Daphne, AL

Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP,
Pediatrician, Fairhope Pediatrics, Fairhope, AL

Register at alaap.org!
Spring Meeting combined quality pediatric education and networking

The Chapter’s 2024 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update, held April 18-21 at The Lodge at Gulf State Park, was another success, with great attendance among both pediatric healthcare providers and exhibitors alike and high praise on the CME evaluation.

National and state speakers provided top-notch presentations on topics including teen mental health, vaccinations, disaster and emergency planning and preparedness, and maternal substance use, among others.

In addition, attendees enjoyed networking events, including the Saturday night dinner and reception, which was held outside on the terrace and generously sponsored again this year by USA Health Children’s and Women’s Hospital.

One of the biggest highlights of the weekend was the time pediatricians shared with one another as they tackled the five events of the tenth annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon—all while raising more than $20,000 for Reach Out and Read-Alabama.

We are excited to announce next year’s Spring Meeting, set for May 1-4, 2025, at the Lodge!
Right medicine, right dose, right route, right duration:
Upcoming ACHIA Antibiotic Stewardship Quality Improvement Collaborative

by Cason Benton, MD, FAAP

The 2021 AAP Policy Statement “Antibiotic Stewardship in Pediatrics” highlighted that antibiotic overuse contributes to antibiotic resistance, which is a threat to Public Health. Antibiotics are the most commonly prescribed class of medications among children, with the majority prescribed in an outpatient setting. While antibiotic therapy has saved many lives, overuse can cause harm. Antibiotic exposure can lead to antibiotic resistance, Clostridioides difficile (C. diff) infections and other drug-related adverse events.

Indeed, 71 percent of C. diff cases in children were community-associated after exposure to antibiotics prescribed for otitis media, sinus infections, and respiratory tract infections. Nearly 50 percent of emergency department visits are due to antibiotic-associated adverse drug events. Nearly three million infections and 35,000 deaths occur every year in the US due to antibiotic-resistant microbes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Antibiotics are frequently used in outpatient settings with a significant proportion of prescriptions considered unnecessary.

Prescriptions for antibiotics per 1,000 people in Alabama are among the highest in the country. (see map)

Antibiotic stewardship is a practice of using antibiotics only when necessary, and when necessary, committing to using the right drug, at the right dose, through the right route, and for the right duration. The American Academy of Pediatrics, in coordination with other organizations such as the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, endorses the use of antibiotic stewardship programs (ASPs) to reduce antibiotic overuse when improving patient outcomes. An effective ASP should include strong leadership, clinical decision support tools, clinician education on best prescribing practices, patient education on viral infections and symptomatic treatment, and antibiotic prescribing audits with feedback.

The Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) will conduct an Antibiotic Stewardship Quality Improvement Collaborative from December 2024 through August 2025. With ACHIA guidance, enrolled practices will develop an antibiotic stewardship program for their clinics and will qualify for Part IV Maintenance of Certification points for the American Board of Pediatrics certification. Shannon Ross, MD, MSPH, FAAP, Professor, UAB Pediatric Infectious Diseases, will discuss outpatient antibiotic stewardship at the Alabama Chapter-AAP Annual Meeting and Fall Pediatric Update on September 15 in Birmingham as well as serving as the collaborative content expert.

For more information, join us at the AL-AAP Annual Meeting or contact Rachel Latham at rlatham@alaap.org.

Over the last decade, research has led the way toward big shifts in recommendations about infant feeding to prevent peanut allergies. The early introduction of peanut foods has the potential to reduce healthcare costs, encourage consumption of affordable and accessible nutrient dense foods and reduce gaps in health equity in this country.

Through this online course, developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, you will learn how to explain early peanut protein introduction to parents and how to prepare infant-friendly peanut-containing foods. The course will also help you effectively respond to common parental questions.

More resources for you and families available at [www.PreventPeanutAllergies.org](http://www.PreventPeanutAllergies.org)

Provided through support from America’s Peanut Farmers

*Continuing Education for Credit Now Available Free to You and Others Who Care for Families and Infants*
Reach Out and Read All About It!

Reach Out and Read-Alabama partners with Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention to raise awareness during Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month

Throughout the month of April, Reach Out and Read-Alabama (ROR-AL) shared information through its social media channels and e-newsletters to promote child abuse prevention awareness. In addition to sharing information, program sites were encouraged to host awareness events in their practices.

“We also created awareness during the Chapter’s Spring Meeting and Pediatric Update by displaying several pinwheel gardens and giving attending providers and exhibitors pinwheel lapel pins to wear to show their support for this important cause,” said Amy Crosby, ROR-AL Statewide Coordinator.

Pediatric healthcare providers have early access to children and families; for many families, their pediatrician is the only person to see them outside the home. This contact allows them to educate families on abuse prevention and awareness and provides an opportunity to step in to help families in crisis if necessary.

“Child Abuse Prevention Month reminds us of our collective responsibility to safeguard the well-being of our children,” Crosby said. “ROR-AL plays a vital role in nurturing safe and supportive environments for all children to thrive.”

ROR-AL to receive pass-through grant from MacKenzie Scott

The Reach Out and Read National Center announced in early April that it had received a $350,000 donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. ROR-AL will receive $15,000 from this grant, which will help existing clinics and support expansion efforts, allowing program sites to give even more children a better start in life.

The grant money allocated to ROR-AL, along with matching funds from the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, will be used to hire a Program Manager.

“The addition of a Program Manager to our team is a game-changer for ROR-AL, increasing our capacity to meet the needs of our clinicians and expanding our reach to serve more children in Alabama,” said Amy Crosby, statewide coordinator. “We are thrilled about this exciting new chapter in Reach Out and Read-Alabama’s story, and we will keep you updated with more information as we move forward.”

Another successful Pentathlon raises more than $20,000

During the 11th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon, the sunny skies and delightful temperatures were perfect for the 37 participants who participated in walks/runs, swims, bikes, kayaks, and reading to benefit ROR-AL.

After a beautiful, sunny Friday afternoon Fun Run on the beach, many participants had a great time learning how to build sandcastles with Sandcastle University. The participants completed various events throughout Saturday, culminating with a fun mixer overlooking the beach with amazing prize drawings for those who took part in “fun”draising for the program.


Rx for Summer Reading celebrates 15 years with Curious George

Over the last 15 years, ROR-AL’s Rx for Summer Reading campaign has included a very hungry caterpillar, dancing barnyard animals, a big red dog in a storm, dinosaurs celebrating birthdays, a bunny visiting the doctor, a superhero kid, a sleepy tiger, a camellia-wearing black bear, a toddler going for a well-child visit, a sunglasses-wearing cat, a worried young girl and a cookie-eating mouse!

We are excited this year to add children’s favorite, Curious George, in the sweet, funny story, Curious George and the Birthday Surprise, full of everything kids love -- party decorations, presents, and a beautiful birthday cake. Program sites across the state will host birthday parties all

continued on page 9
Reach Out and Read continued from page 8

summer as they share the love of reading with their patients and families.

ROR-AL is partnering with All About Books (AAB) for this year’s event, working with the marketing department to create materials for the events. “We are excited to be providing the book for this year and we are also planning to do a birthday celebration in our office,” said Sarah Pelkey, AAB Marketing Director. “We are going to have decorations and cupcakes and invite some of the AAB kids of our employees, including my own, as we like to involve them when we can.” AAB is also sharing posts on their social media channels to promote the event and will feature ROR-AL on a blog post this summer.

For program site event information, visit www.roralabama.org/rx-for-summer-reading and follow our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Alabama represented at 2024 ROR Leadership Conference

More than 100 Reach Out and Read leaders from across the country gathered in New York City in May for the 2024 Reach Out and Read Leadership Conference, “Moments that Matter: Strengthening Early Relationships Through Systems Change.” The goals were to build, grow, and strengthen the Reach Out and Read movement to deepen how we as an organization can: 1) expand Early Relational Health through a universal intervention for all children; 2) sustainably change systems that impact children, families, and communities; and 3) elevate public awareness and expand who knows and understands ROR’s work and its vision for all children across the country.

Amy Crosby and Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, represented ROR-AL at the conference. “I loved learning from and spending time with experts in the field of early relational health and how to maximize Reach Out and Read’s impact through this discipline,” Dr. Dawson said. “True investment in early childhood is by supporting the relationships of young children. Regardless of the intervention, focusing on the relationship will yield the most benefit.”

At the conference, ROR’s 35th anniversary was celebrated with a 35-book collection curated to embrace inclusive stories about the families, communities, and cultures served by the program. Three hundred fifty thousand new copies of these books by acclaimed and emerging authors and illustrators were printed to be shared with young children at ROR sites nationwide.

James M. Perrin, MD, FAAP, professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, gave the keynote address, “Improving the Health and Well-being of Children through Healthcare System Transformation.” Other conference topics included exam room interactions, navigating complex political challenges, securing public funding, brand visibility to increase impact, positive childhood experiences, improving parent/caregiver experiences, and others.

“It was wonderful reconnecting with and learning from other Reach Out and Read leaders, Board Members, and speakers. We can’t wait to attend the next conference,” Crosby said.
Advances in genetic testing mean more diagnoses and longer wait times

By Nathaniel H Robin, MD, Medical Director, UAB Genetics and Professor, Department of Genetics and Pediatrics, Heersink UAB School of Medicine and Taylor McClinchey, MS, CGC, Genetic Counselor, UAB Genetics

The ability for medical genetics to make a genetic diagnosis has increased dramatically in the past decade. This is in large part to advances in genetic testing technologies, subsequent increases in genetic discoveries and knowledge, and increased access to these tests.

In the pediatric age group, the most common indications for referral are neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD), including autism and multiple congenital anomalies.

In 2003, when testing was limited to G-banded karyotype and select FISH testing and gene sequencing, the diagnostic yield of karyotype for NDD/Intellectual disability was ~3.7% (1). Today, the new technologies of chromosomal microarray and exome sequencing have improved the diagnosis rate to over 60% (3).

With their improved diagnostic rates, these new tests also bring more complex and nuanced results. Variants of uncertain significance, secondary findings, incidental findings, and misidentified paternity are among the many potential “complications” of modern genetic testing. It is therefore essential to provide pre- and post-test genetic counseling when ordering these tests. While counseling can be provided by anyone, the complexity of these conversations often requires a genetic counselor or medical geneticist to ensure that the family understands the benefits and limitations of the testing.

The demand for genetics appointments has never been greater. Unfortunately, the workforce, both here at UAB and across the nation, has not grown proportionally. The wait time for an appointment in a Children’s of Alabama pediatrics genetics clinic can be as long as 8-14 months, a clearly unacceptable number. (Note: we will, of course, see patients ASAP for urgent needs at the request of the referring physician).

To address this, we revised our clinic scheduling to create a parallel “genetic counselor” clinic (GC Clinic) schedule. These visits are designed to utilize genetic counselors at the top of their scope of practice to increase capacity and reduce wait times. Although genetic counselors have highly specialized training in genetics, they do not have a medical degree and are not trained to perform physical exams.

A typical pediatric genetics visit includes a physical/dysmorphological exam from a medical geneticist, which can be crucial for making a proper genetic diagnosis. However, many patients benefit from genetic counseling alone and do not require a physical exam. Genetic counselors can see these patients mostly independently. Common indications for GC Clinic include family history of a known genetic disorder, isolated autism, hearing loss, Down syndrome, and reviewing genetic testing results. We estimated that implementing the GC Clinics would reduce wait times to 3-6 weeks. It worked, for a short time, but soon even these clinics had a wait time of 3-6 months. This reflects the unrelenting demand on genetics services that can only be addressed by increasing capacity. We are currently working on this as well.

For questions regarding referrals to genetics, call the UAB Department of Genetics at (205) 934-4983.

References:


USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital/USA Department of Pediatrics updates

By Gul Dadlani, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Alabama

Six USA medical students earn scholarships to Spring Meeting

With a goal of learning more about careers in pediatrics, six medical students received travel scholarships to attend the Spring Meeting of the Alabama Chapter- AAP held in Gulf Shores in April.
Let's Hear it from Our Departments of Pediatrics continued from page 10

The Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine students, in their third year of training, included Hope Lund, Emily Cleveland, Sarah Jackson, Justine Magadia, Kahlea Haladwala and Kara Nix. They were selected to receive scholarships based on their interest in pediatrics and future career choices. During the two-day meeting, students enhanced their knowledge in clinical aspects of pediatrics and health issues affecting children in Alabama. In addition, they were able to network with other medical students and pediatricians within the state.

USA Health NICU joins the Tiny Baby Collaborative
The neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital has been selected to join the Tiny Baby Collaborative. With a goal of improving outcomes for extremely premature infants, the collaborative is composed of approximately 25 hospitals spanning four countries that routinely resuscitate children born at 22 to 23 weeks’ gestation and have a track record of successful outcomes. Neonatal staff from hospitals in Germany, Japan and Sweden also belong to the group. As a member, USA Health will share with the rest of the world its experiences in caring for babies born at this gestational age.

Discovery happens here.

When physicians, scientists and researchers with extraordinary talent and passion are given the technology, the facilities, and the support, they achieve great things. The discoveries, innovations and clinical trials happening today will help shape the future of treatments and lead to cures.
New agreement required for all ACHN PCP Groups (Deadline for new ACHN agreements is July 1, 2024)

All ACHN enrollments established under the ACHN program that began on October 1, 2019, will terminate on September 30, 2024. Primary care physicians (PCPs) who want to receive or continue to receive, without delay, bonus and participation payments in conjunction with the state’s ACHN program must sign new participation agreements with (1) the Alabama Medicaid Agency and (2) at least one of the ACHN entities. Both agreements are required to be on the PCP Group’s enrollment file to be considered fully enrolled in the ACHN program.

For the latest ALERT on this requirement, dated May 22, 2024, please refer to the Alabama Medicaid Agency, Newsroom tab under ALERTS or at https://medicaid.alabama.gov/alerts.aspx.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) services now available in the Gulf Coast region

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) services are now available in Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia, and Conecuh counties. NFP is a nationally recognized, evidence-based program that provides prenatal, postpartum, and infant home visiting services until the child reaches age two.

Goals of the NFP program:

• Improving health outcomes for mother and child
• Decreasing total Medicaid expenditures among families who receive NFP services
• Increasing healthy spacing between birth to 24 months
• Reducing infant and maternal mortality

Providers may refer eligible recipients to NFP of Central Alabama (UAB) for NFP services in the above-specified counties.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about Medicaid’s NFP program, contact Wendy Williams at wendy.williams@medicaid.alabama.gov or Travis Houser at travis.houser@medicaid.alabama.gov.

NEW! Slide set and video presentation on EPSDT fundamentals

As part of Alabama Medicaid’s outreach efforts, the EPSDT team has developed a comprehensive slide set and video presentation aimed at educating participating providers about Alabama Medicaid’s EPSDT program fundamentals. The presentation provides essential information and guidelines to enhance providers’ understanding and utilization of the EPSDT program. The presentation can be found on Medicaid’s website at https://tinyurl.com/38r8ufej. Additionally, the full presentation is available on YouTube at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=linC9MQHDwQ.

The Alabama Pediatrician Podcast: Have you had a listen yet? Check out clinical and Alabama-specific content!

The Alabama Pediatrician Podcast now has more than 1,200 downloads and hosts John McLendon, MD, FAAP, and Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, continue to add content. Have you listened yet?

Check out the current episodes—36 at time of writing—which can be found here: https://www.buzzsprout.com/2176486/episodes. Click each episode to read the synopsis for more details. Or simply go to your favorite podcast purveyor and search for “The Alabama Pediatrician.”

Let the hosts know of ideas for future episodes, or if you would like to join as a guest, by completing this short form: https://www.alaaap.org/submit-your-podcast-topic-ideas.
Measles update: what’s the latest?

As of May 9, 2024, 132 measles cases have been reported in 21 states. Importantly, these include the states of Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana. However, no cases have been reported in Alabama. These numbers are updated every Thursday and are reported on the CDC’s website. Additionally, there have been eight outbreaks (three or more related cases) reported in 2024 and 69% of cases (91 of 132) are outbreak-associated. For comparison, an average of 50-150 cases are reported on a yearly basis in the U.S. (since 2000) with a high of just over 1,200 cases in 2019 and just 58 reported in 2023. Most of the current cases have occurred in unimmunized or underimmunized individuals. The last measles outbreak in Alabama was in 2002, with 13 symptomatic cases that were exposed in daycare and medical settings.

Many of us (including myself) may not have seen a clinical case of measles in our clinical careers. Therefore, we encourage you to use the resources that the CDC provides on its website (https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html). In particular, pay attention to the clinical course. Understanding the epidemiology, incubation period, clinical symptoms and protection of a complete vaccination course is essential to accurately considering measles in the differential diagnosis of a febrile child with a rash. Because reporting a potential case of measles to Public Health is required by state rule as well as for testing, also familiarize yourself with the reporting process (https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/measles.html). Feel free to take pictures to submit with your testing request!

Our advice is to follow these simple steps: Identify, Isolate, Inform, Test and Treat. If there is concern for a patient who may be infected, consider evaluating the patient out of the clinic and/or bring the patient through a secluded entrance. If your evaluation reveals concerns, immediately inform Public Health for testing recommendations as well as isolation instructions for the patient and contacts. Finally, there may be recommendations for measles vaccine or measles immune globulin for exposed contacts.

We appreciate all that you do and continue the good work of protecting our community through routine vaccination!

UAB Sanitation Health Program: an overview

Many of you may not be aware of the work being done by some of our faculty at UAB. The Sanitation Health Program (https://sites.uab.edu/sanitationhealthstudy/) is a collaborative effort between UAB, the Rural Health Medical Program, Inc., the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Consortium for Rural Alabama Water and Wastewater Management and the CDC. Led by Drs. Claudette Poole and Amy Hutson Chatham, this project aims to evaluate public health related to failing sanitation in the Black Belt of Alabama.

In some areas of Alabama, failing septic systems and the use of straight pipe systems for sewage disposal are common in rural communities without access to public sewers. Due to poor sanitation, children and pregnant women are at a higher risk of contracting intestinal infections and parasites. This program, funded by the CDC, is committed to reducing and preventing health hazards caused by failing sanitation across the high-risk counties of Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Perry, Sumter, and Wilcox. The goals of the project are to work with community organizations to educate the public on poor sanitation, improve failing sanitation systems across the Black Belt and connect at-risk communities with local healthcare services and providers.

Some of the work done in the region led to an article recently published in Pediatrics by Drs. Poole and Kimberlin: https://tinyurl.com/ycx8xdp

Lastly, please consider completing this recently updated online course for healthcare providers on Sanitation and Health (CME offered): https://tinyurl.com/459z72rj
Ladinsky appointed to AAP Committee on State Government Affairs, receives Lion Award

Congratulations to Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, a pediatrician and professor in the UAB Division of Academic General Pediatrics, for two distinct honors:

The Alabama Chapter-AAP has just learned of her appointment by the AAP Executive Board to serve on the national Committee on State Government Affairs. Effective July 1, 2024, she will serve a six-year term, contingent on Board reappointment every two years. Dr. Ladinsky was nominated by the Chapter leaders, who congratulate her on this appointment!

In addition, on March 30, 2024, Dr. Ladinsky was presented with the Lion Award from the Southern Jewish Resource Network for Gender and Sexual Diversity “to honor Birmingham’s very own Lion, Dr. Morissa Ladinsky. Through her daily work as a clinician and educator at UAB, she protects gender-diverse youth in our community.”

Congratulations on your appointment as well as this honor.

Well-deserved, Dr. Ladinsky!

ICYMI: Chapter launches firearms safety & injury/death prevention resource page for members

The Chapter’s ad hoc firearms injury/death prevention advocacy committee has now conducted two webinars, with more on the way, as a way of educating our members on how to get involved in advocating for firearm safety and injury/death prevention—whether in practice or with legislators and policy makers.

Links to the two webinar recordings, as well as many other resources, are now available on Chapter website at https://www.alaap.org/firearm-injurydeath-prevention-resources (located under the “Tools for Pediatricians” tab).

In addition, Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 3 representative, a pediatrician in the Emergency Department at Children’s of Alabama, and chair of our ad hoc committee, will speak at the 2024 Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 14 on the importance of pediatricians talking to their families and how to do it.

Look for details on the Annual Meeting page, and register now!

Nominate colleagues for Chapter awards
Carden Johnston Leadership, Marsha Raulerson Advocacy, Early Career Physician awards

In 2011, the Chapter began a tradition of giving two prestigious awards, the Carden Johnston Leadership Award and the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award, named in honor of these two Chapter members who have given so much to pediatrics in Alabama. In 2022, the Chapter added the Early Career Physician Award to recognize an early career pediatrician who has gone above and beyond during this phase of his/her journey as a pediatrician.

The Chapter Executive Board is currently calling for nominations for these awards, which will be given at the Annual Meeting in September. Please read the criteria for each by visiting the links below; submission of materials is due to the Chapter office at llec@alaap.org by June 30 (extended from June 15).


Let’s Hear it from Our Departments of Pediatrics continued from page 11

Kalsang Dolma, MD, FAAP, a neonatologist at USA Health and an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Frederick P Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama, will serve as the primary investigator for the Tiny Baby Collaborative study, a multi-center inventory of neonatal-perinatal interventions (MINI). The MINI study serves as a registry detailing outcomes and practices for all deliveries and infants admitted to intensive care at 22 to 23 weeks’ gestation at participating hospitals.

Bridge Program expands for children with medical complexities

The Bridge Program at USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital has been a lifeline for families who receive an unexpected fetal diagnosis. The program was launched to support pregnant mothers struggling with fetal anomalies. As other needs emerged, the Bridge Program has expanded beyond pregnancy to include care for pediatric patients with medical complexities, as well as hospice and palliative care for those admitted to Children’s & Women’s Hospital. The goal is to help children and families set goals to live their best life possible, while navigating serious or numerous medical conditions. Staff members working in the program include Brandy Merritt, MD, FAAP, a pediatric critical care specialist and lead physician, plus a registered nurse and advanced practice provider. Their goal is to work closely with a patient’s primary medical team, including case managers, child life specialists and members of children’s therapy services.
DON'T WAIT VACCINATE

Get vaccinated to protect against respiratory viruses.

Make sure you and your family are up-to-date on all recommended vaccines, including respiratory virus vaccines. Don’t wait, get vaccinated today to help stop the spread and keep our community safe.

alabamapublichealth.gov/imm
The Alabama Rural Medical Service Awards (ARMSA) incentivize family medicine, internal medicine, pediatric medicine, Med/Ped physicians, and family medicine nurse practitioners to practice in rural, medically underserved areas in Alabama. ARMSA offers $50,000 a year for primary care physicians, with a 3-year maximum award period. The award is a service loan that is payable by years of service.