



# The Alabama Pediatrician

Second Quarter 2022

## From the President

Summertime: a great time to remind patients that YOU are the captain of their medical team!



**Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP**  
Chapter President

Ah, summertime! Our patients' excitement is palpable and their parents' exhaustion is imminent. As pediatricians, we traditionally look forward to a break in the revolving door of sniffles, fevers, and flu-like symptoms that the winter brings

as we gear up for sports physicals and back-to-school checkups. I don't have to tell you why routine wellness care is important for the health of your patients. You can all tell stories about detecting a hidden diagnosis during a wellness visit or uncovering an unrealized social or emotional problem with a routine screening.

But don't forget that routine wellness care is also important for the health of your practice. When your patients see you regularly, you maintain a healthy relationship with your families and continually reaffirm yourself in the captain's position on that child's medical team. Now, more than ever, competitors are trying to downplay our importance as the pediatric medical home and dismiss our voice as pediatric health experts. Keeping in regular contact with your patients through regular wellness care recall will help you remind them of your importance in their lives.

As you bring your patients in for their summertime physicals, don't forget to provide all the services that you are uniquely qualified to do: developmental and mental health screening, obesity anticipatory guidance, and vaccine counseling and administration (including COVID-19 vaccines!). And don't be afraid to remind your patients and their parents that YOU provide care they can't receive anywhere else.

## Spring Meeting combined quality education and networking in a relaxing, new location

The Chapter's 2022 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update, held April 28 – May 1 at the The Lodge at Gulf State Park, was a tremendous success, with attendance nearly at pre-COVID levels and everyone enjoying the new venue.

"We heard nothing but great comments, both from employees and exhibitors, about the new location," said Chapter Executive Director Linda Lee, APR. "Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere of The Lodge, the content of the education and getting to spend time with colleagues from across the state."

National and state speakers provided top-notch presentations on topics including COVID-19 updates, substance use, child health equity, obesity QI learnings, and

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Miss Mobile Bay's Outstanding Teen 2022, Sydney Cantley, a patient of Chapter President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, addresses Spring Meeting attendees about her platform, promoting the importance of the adolescent well visit.



Chapter staff Amy Crosby, Linda Lee, Rachel Latham, Jill Powell and Salina Sowell



Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 6 Representative, was one of several who won fantastic door prizes at the conference.



Representatives from pediatric practices that participated in the 2021 ACHIA obesity QI collaborative accept completion certificates from ACHIA Medical Director Cason Benton, MD, FAAP.

### Chapter Office and Staff Alabama Chapter – AAP

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### Alabama Chapter – AAP

#### Mission:

The mission of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to obtain optimal health and well-being for all children in Alabama, and to provide educational and practice support for its membership so the highest quality of medical care can be achieved.

#### Values:

Children must be highly valued by society.

Each child must develop to his/her highest potential.

Children must have strong advocates for they have no voice of their own.

Pediatricians are essential to achieving optimal child health. The work of pediatricians, and the profession of pediatrics, must endure and grow even stronger.

#### Vision:

Children in Alabama are happy and healthy; Alabama pediatricians are professionally fulfilled and financially secure.

### Spring Meeting continued from page 1

pediatric UTI, among others.

Attendees also enjoyed networking events, such as the Saturday night dinner and reception, which was outside on the terrace and generously sponsored again this year by USA Health Children's and Women's Hospital.

The highlight of the weekend was the time pediatricians shared with one another as they tackled the five events of the ninth annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon to raise monies for Reach Out and Read-Alabama. More than 40 people participated, which was a record for the event.

We are thrilled to announce next year's Spring Meeting, set for May 25-28, 2023 (contract pending), to be held once again at the Lodge!



Attendees enjoyed an engaging presentation by Chip Hart on finding, hiring and keeping good team members in a pediatric practice.

## Chapter's 2022 Annual Meeting to focus on mental health, chronic medical conditions, oral health

Chapter CME Chair and executive staff have finalized the list of topics for this year's Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update, to be held at the beautiful Ross Bridge Resort in Birmingham on September 9-11, 2022! **Note that this year's meeting will also include a hybrid (Zoom) attendance option.** As usual, this year's meeting will include a Friday Practice Management Workshop for pediatricians and their staffs (see page 12 for more details), as well as networking opportunities and fantastic clinical CME that will focus on mental health, chronic medical conditions, oral health and more! Registration will open this month; please check the Chapter web site, your email and your mailbox for registration materials soon! Meanwhile, here is the list of topics for the main (clinical) meeting:

- Preventing Caries: Elevating Children Up to Breakdown a Major Health Inequity
- US Preventive Service Task Force Recommendation B for Fluoride for Pediatricians
- Teen Depression
- Updates on Suicide Prevention
- Functional Abdominal Pain
- Healing-Centered Support for Families Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence
- Mental Health Services for Children in Alabama: Supporting the Pediatric Medical Home
- Endocrine Updates for the Pediatrician
- Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C): An Update
- One Too Many Fevers: Evaluation of Recurrent Fever in Children
- Asthma: Guidelines Update



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### 2022 Legislative Session recap

The Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature ended in April, with both positive and negative news for pediatrics. The Alabama Chapter-AAP leadership and lobbying team worked steadily to promote legislation that positively affects children and pediatricians 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 at least two that were introduced that would have done so. The Chapter's work with the House Health Committee had a lot to do with this success for pediatrics.
- The Chapter-supported Childhood Lead Reduction Act, which puts penalties in place for licensed or unlicensed contractors who violate the 1997 Alabama Lead Reduction Act, passed in the "witching hour." We appreciate the work of the Alabama Department of Public Health in making this happen, as well as the support of Chapter members who reached out to their legislators on this issue.
- Despite the Chapter's hard advocacy work, the legislature passed a transgender treatment ban that makes it a crime to treat gender dysphoria in minors. The Chapter's position has been that this legislation controls the practice of medicine, interfering with the doctor-patient relationship and violating current AAP guidelines for the care of children. Since the law passed, groups have filed a joint lawsuit against the State of Alabama to overturn the law, and a higher court has now granted a preliminary injunction and enjoined the defendants from enforcing the section of the law that bans medical treatment (the ban on surgical treatment is still in place). This injunction or "pause" is in effect until the case goes to trial. The Alabama Chapter-AAP joined other medical organizations at the national level in filing an Amicus brief that supports the plaintiffs.
- The Chapter was also part of a multi-organizational effort through the Cover Alabama Coalition to extend Medicaid funding from 60 days postpartum to 12 months. The Chapter leadership was part of early discussions with the Commissioner on this issue. In March, the Ways and Means budget chair added this earmarked amount to the General Fund budget, which passed both houses and was signed by the Governor. Now Alabama, like a number of other states, is applying for a "State Plan Amendment" to solidify this coverage for mothers on a "pilot basis" (the Medicaid Agency will be studying its effects on maternal outcomes); this coverage is slated to begin on October 1 (more details forthcoming soon!).
- HB 402 and SB 307, which would have allowed pharmacists to "prescribe" and administer ALL vaccines, regardless of age, without any physician involvement, did not pass. The AL-AAP, along with other specialty societies and the Medical Association, opposed this legislation and pushed for an age floor if it had passed. We fully expect that this bill will be introduced again next year. Many thanks to members who contacted their legislators to vote "no" on this legislation.

### Vaccinating children and adolescents against COVID is the right thing to do

*By David Kimberlin MD, FAAP, Co-director, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine*

There are many things to regret as we move into the middle of our third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the vaccines are not one of them. They are miracles. They have proven to be remarkably effective at providing long-lasting protection against severe COVID disease, hospitalization, and death. If you are vaccinated, you have a much, MUCH greater chance of surviving COVID, of not getting severely sick, and of avoiding hospitalization.

### How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

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## Chapter domestic violence project provides important guidance for pediatricians on how to address impacts on children

By Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, pediatrician, Charles Henderson Child Health Center and physician lead, Chapter Domestic Violence Project

As mentioned in the last *Alabama Pediatrician*, the Chapter is in the middle of a short project to help pediatricians support children in families experiencing domestic violence.

Led by the Chapter in coordination with the Alabama Campaign Against Domestic Violence, the four-month initiative aims to help link Chapter members to local DV specialists so that referrals and services can be better provided for these families, thereby addressing one of the most prolific adverse childhood experiences.

With technical assistance from the AAP and its partner, Futures Without Violence, the Chapter has now held three webinars on this topic (see titles and recording links below), and will be presenting learnings and tips for pediatricians at the September meeting.

- *Supporting Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and their Children: Bridging the Gap between Healthcare & Service Providers* – <https://bit.ly/3NO7nH8>
- *Supporting Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and their Children: A Deeper Dive into Accessing Services for Families in Need* – <https://bit.ly/3MbrqcqD>
- *Supporting Foreign-Born Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and Their Children: Cultural Humility and Language Access* – <https://bit.ly/3NCc8Uo>

One of the key take-aways for pediatricians is to follow the three-step CUES evidence-based intervention: 1) know the state's confidentiality laws and how to talk to a parent privately; 2) universally educate families to start the conversation on safe and healthy relationships; and 3) support the parent/caregiver if abuse is disclosed and know how to provide a warm hand-off to local domestic violence specialists who can help.

Please see the CUES infographic on the opposite page for this information and feel free to clip it, copy it and use it in your office. More on this at the Annual Meeting!

We also are continuing to look for local pediatricians to sign up to be part of a local team consisting of at least one pediatrician, pediatric staff point person, DV specialists, child welfare workers, etc. The local teams are being asked to develop a workflow and help us ultimately develop the blueprint for action for pediatricians that will be presented in September.

Sign up now to participate by scanning the QR code and completing the short form there.

## CUES AN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN HEALTH SETTINGS

shown to improve health and safety outcomes for survivors

Survivors say they want health providers to:

**Be nonjudgmental • Listen • Offer information and support • Not push for disclosure**

### C: Confidentiality

- ▶ Know your state's reporting requirements and share any limits of confidentiality with your patients.
- ▶ Always see patients alone for part of every visit so that you can bring up relationship violence safely.
- ! Make sure you have access to professional interpreters and do not rely on family or friends to interpret.

"Before we get started I want to let you know that I won't share anything we talk about today outside of the care team here unless you were to tell me about [find out your state's mandatory reporting requirements]."

### UE: Universal Education + Empowerment

- ▶ Give each patient two safety cards to start the conversation about relationships and how they affect health.
- ▶ Open the card and encourage them to take a look. Make sure patients know that you're a safe person for them to talk to.
- ! Offering safety cards to all patients ensures that everyone gets access to information about relationships, not just those who choose to disclose experiences of violence.

"I'm giving two of these cards to all of my patients. They talk about relationships and how they affect our health. Take a look, and I've also included one for a friend or family member. On the back of the card there are resources you can call or text, and you can always talk to me about how you think your relationships are affecting your health. Is any of this a part of your story?"

### S: Support

- ▶ Though disclosure of violence is not the goal, it will happen -- know how to support someone who discloses.
- ▶ Make a warm referral to your local domestic/sexual violence partner agency or national hotlines (on the back of all safety cards).
- ▶ Offer health promotion strategies and a care plan that takes surviving abuse into consideration.
- ! What resources are available in your area for survivors of domestic and sexual violence? How about for LGBTQ, immigrant, or youth survivors? Partnering with local resources makes all the difference.

"Thank you for sharing this with me, I'm so sorry this is happening. What you're telling me makes me worried about your safety and health..."

A lot of my patients experience things like this. There are resources that can help. [Share name, phone and a little about your local DV program] I would be happy to connect you today if that interests you."

For more information or to order materials contact the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence: **M-F 9am-5pm PST | 415-678-5500 | TTY: 866-678-8901**  
health@futureswithoutviolence.org  
ipvhealth.org | for community health centers: ipvhealthpartners.org

**FUTURES**  
WITHOUT VIOLENCE

- place this poster in your health staff break room -



### Vaccinating children and adolescents against COVID continued from page 3

That's why making sure the vaccines are available to children is so critical. The Pfizer vaccine is already fully approved for those 16 and older, and is authorized for children 5 through 15 years of age. And later this month, external expert advisors for both the FDA and the CDC will consider authorizing and recommending it for children 6 months through 4 years of age. Cumulatively, these experts have more than 1,000 years of experience and training in pediatric and adult infectious diseases, epidemiology and public health. They know what they are doing. I know this because I have been one of two liaisons from the American Academy of Pediatrics to the CDC's advisory committee since 2007. For the past 15 years, including throughout the pandemic, I have witnessed firsthand their dedication to the health and wellbeing of every American as they carefully and methodically evaluate all the data.

The continuing spread of misinformation and disinformation about the COVID vaccines is regretful and dangerous. In many ways, this has been no different from previous pandemics. Even Founding Father Benjamin Franklin lost his four-year-old son to smallpox in 1736, which at the time was the world's only vaccine-preventable disease. Franklin was forced to confront misinformation when rumors spread that his child died after getting vaccinated for smallpox. Fearing that the gossip would deter other parents from vaccinating their children, Franklin set the record straight by publishing an article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. "I do hereby sincerely declare that he was not [vaccinated]," Franklin wrote. For more than 50 years until his death in 1790, Franklin lamented not having vaccinated his beloved son.

A novel challenge with misinformation during the current pandemic, though, is the ease and speed with which it spreads.

So here are the facts:

- There have been over 4.8 million reported cases of and more than 15,000 hospitalizations for COVID to date among children 5-11 years old.
- COVID-19 was the 11th leading cause of death in children ages 5-11 in 2020.
- Approximately 1 in 12 children have Long COVID following recovery from infection. The most common symptoms are like those found in adults and include fatigue, headache, insomnia, trouble concentrating, muscle and joint pain, and cough.
- Approximately 1 in 3 children who develop Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Childhood, or MIS-C,

following an oftentimes asymptomatic COVID infection, will still have life-altering impairments six months after their initial illness.

The good news is that the COVID vaccine can prevent much of this suffering:

- Those 5 and older who were vaccinated with at least the primary series were 10 times less likely to die from COVID-19 in February compared with unvaccinated people.
- Those 12 and older who were vaccinated with a primary series and booster dose were 20 times less likely to die from COVID-19 in February compared with unvaccinated people.
- During the Omicron wave last winter, COVID-19 incidence rates among children ages 5-11 who had received the primary vaccine series were 1.3 times lower than rates in unvaccinated children.
- During the Omicron wave, COVID-19-associated hospitalization rates among children ages 5-11 vaccinated with a primary series were half as high as rates in unvaccinated children.

The Pfizer COVID vaccine has been studied in thousands of children. It generates a comparable if not superior immune response in children compared with young adults. We now know that vaccination against COVID requires a 2-dose primary series plus 1 booster dose. This is very consistent with other pediatric vaccines that we have used for decades, where a booster dose cements the benefits of the first doses of the vaccine.

The bottom line:

- COVID can be bad for everyone, including children.
- Severe COVID, hospitalization, and death can be prevented by vaccination.
- COVID vaccines are safe for children, and therefore the same benefit they provide in keeping adults out of the hospital is seen for children.

As physicians, we advise parents to please talk to their child's pediatrician or primary care physician if they have any questions about why their child should receive the COVID vaccine.

*Editor's note: This article was written as an op-ed in response to a recent anti-COVID vaccination push and resultant media story. The Chapter leadership thought it would be informative to reprint it here.*

## Coding

### O r n e r

#### Vaccine Counseling Coverage - FAQs

Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the Alabama Chapter-AAP, through its Pediatric Council and specifically, much follow-up by Lynn Brown, CPC, with Children's of Alabama, Alabama Medicaid is now covering Vaccine Counseling via CPT code 99401. The Agency has just updated its Vaccine Counseling FAQ, which we do not think has been shared with all providers and includes important clarifications regarding the codes, documentation, etc. Please see the link to the document here: <https://bit.ly/3tc8vMT>.

## Teen Mental Wellness 2023: COA PATHS ECHO + ACHIA QI

by Cason Benton, MD, FAAP

### Teen Mental Health

Before the pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people with one in five adolescents having a mental health disorder. Moreover, Alabama youth, when compared to national samples, are more likely to have attempted suicide in the last 12 months and to have been treated medically as a result. Early data from emergency room usage and hospitalizations point to an alarming increase in adolescent mental health concerns during the pandemic.



### The Role of the Pediatrician

To address this mental health emergency, pediatricians need to be a part of the solution. The Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care (GLAD-PC) recommend universal depression screening and follow-up for 12- to 18-year-olds, when the following can be pursued:

- (1) additional training regarding issues such as advances in screening, diagnosis, treatment, follow-up, liability, consent, confidentiality, and billing;
- (2) practice and systems changes, such as office staff training and buy-in, EMRs, and automated tracking systems, whenever available; and
- (3) establishing linkages with mental health services.

An exciting partnership between the PATHS program (Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services) housed at Children's of Alabama and ACHIA's quality improvement collaborative will help the practices "check off" the GLAD components.

### QI Learning Collaborative

Participants in the QI collaborative will engage in PATHS' behavioral health training using Project ECHO, a guided practice model of telementoring that brings specialty knowledge to primary care practices (visit <https://bit.ly/3xeIe33> for more information). Additionally, these practices will also use ACHIA quality improvement coaching and data platforms to assess the reliability of the clinician's universal screening and follow-up systems. Those interested practices can learn more about the 2023 Teen Mental Wellness QI Collaborative at the AL-AAP's Annual Meeting in September during a session with a teen mental health speaker. Practices may also contact Project Coordinator Rachel Latham at [rlatham@alaap.org](mailto:rlatham@alaap.org).

### Rural Providers: Start the PATH to Improving Behavioral Care for All Ages Now!

While not part of the 2023 Teen Mental Wellness Collaborative due to grant stipulations, the PATHS program has behavioral health supports in addition to the ECHO training for primary care providers in Alabama's rural communities through the following:

- care coordination for patients of all ages with complex behavioral conditions;
- referrals to behavioral health resources in the patient's communities where available;
- provider-to-provider consultation with a member of the PATHS mental health team, when caring for a patient with behavioral health needs; and

## Teen Mental Wellness continued from page 6

- behavioral health services via telemedicine in the pediatrician's office when specialist intervention is needed.

PATHS is working on expanding these supports more broadly in Alabama. Rural providers interested in learning more, including opportunities in 2022, should visit <https://www.childrens.org/paths> or contact Susan Griffin at [susan.griffin@childrens.org](mailto:susan.griffin@childrens.org) or at 205-638-5673.

### References

Perou, et al., & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2013). Mental health surveillance among children—United States, 2005-2011. *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Supplements*, 62(2), 1–35.

Ghandour, R. M., et al. (2019). Prevalence and treatment of depression, anxiety, and conduct problems in U.S. children. *The Journal of Pediatrics* 206, 256–267.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019) Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/yrbs). Accessed on 2021.

Rachel A. Zuckerbrot, et al; Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care (GLAD-PC): Part I. Practice Preparation, Identification, Assessment, and Initial Management. *Pediatrics* March 2018; 141 (3): e20174081. 10.1542/peds.2017-4081

## Event Calendar

September 9-11, 2022  
2022 Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update (& the 2022 Practice Management Workshop)  
Ross Bridge Resort  
Birmingham, AL  
and via Zoom

October 7 - 11, 2022  
2022 AAP National Conference & Exhibition  
Anaheim, CA

May 25 – 28, 2023  
2023 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update  
The Lodge at Gulf State Park  
Gulf Shores, AL

## Chapter welcomes new Project Coordinator Rachel Latham

The Alabama Chapter-AAP is happy to welcome and introduce our new Project Coordinator, Rachel Latham, who joined the team in March! Rachel is responsible for project management for the Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA), the administration of the Practice Management Association, and overseeing other Chapter projects as needed.

Rachel comes to the Chapter with a professional background in both the legal field and education. After attaining a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Elementary Education, and then teaching for more than a decade, she was ready to transition her career into project management, which was her favorite aspect of being a team leader for her division at Highlands School in Birmingham.

Rachel and her husband Ryan live in Birmingham and have two children, a 15-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter. In her free time, Rachel enjoys walking her dogs, hiking, camping, and cheering her kids on as they play lacrosse, football, and competitive cheerleading. Rachel is thrilled to join the Chapter and continue doing meaningful work for the children of Alabama in her new role.

“I am very excited to be a part of the Alabama Chapter of the AAP and ACHIA! I look forward to advancing and expanding this work to improve healthcare for children across our state,” Rachel said.

Her focus over the next few months is to help ACHIA's medical director Cason Benton, MD, FAAP, plan the 2023 quality improvement learning collaborative, which will focus on adolescent/teen depression. Rachel fills the position of long-time project coordinator, Linda Champion.

Rachel can be reached at [rlatham@alaap.org](mailto:rlatham@alaap.org) and 205-215-4543. Please join our staff in welcoming her!



Rachel Latham



## Reach Out and Read All About It!

Reach Out and Read-Alabama's 13th annual Summer Campaign focuses on emotional and mental wellness and encouraging families to read together.

What do you do when you have a worry? How do you handle your emotions and anxieties? Just as adults have worries, children have worries too. While a child's worries may not be how to pay the mortgage this month, their worries can seem just as stressful. As many parents or caregivers struggle to handle their own emotions and anxieties, how can they help their children manage their own worries?

Through the 13th Rx for Summer Reading campaign, Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites hope to help families tackle their worries by prescribing the book, *Ruby Finds A Worry*, to their patients during their well-child visits.

This perceptive and poignant story is the perfect springboard for talking to children about emotions and anxieties. "Ruby is a happy, curious, imaginative young girl. But one day, she finds something unexpected: a Worry. It's not such a big Worry, at first. But every day, it grows a little bigger . . . and a little bigger . . . . Until eventually, the Worry is ENORMOUS and is all she can think about. But when Ruby befriends a young boy, she discovers that everyone has worries, and not only that, there's a great way to get rid of them too . . . she just has to share her feelings."

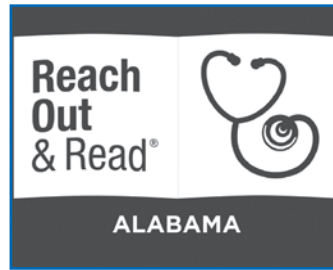
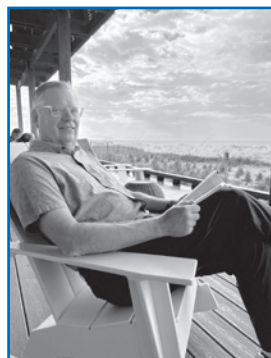
"When we talk about our emotions, we are better able to handle them. Filled with tips for families, *Ruby Finds A Worry* is an excellent book to start conversations about emotions in the home," said Amy Crosby, Reach Out and Read-Alabama Statewide Coordinator. "In addition to helping families support positive social emotional development, Reach Out and Read providers also create a space where the families we serve foster healthy brain development and create strong bonds that last a lifetime."

Program sites throughout the state will host *Ruby Finds A Worry* activities and

events throughout the summer. For more information, contact Salina Sowell at [stsowell@roralabama.org](mailto:stsowell@roralabama.org).

Ninth annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon a great success!

The ninth annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon held April 29-30 during the Spring Meeting was the one of our most successful yet with 40 participants taking part in the event by reading, kayaking, walking/running, biking and swimming at The Lodge at Gulf State Park. Thanks to the donations of many businesses and individuals, participants earned chances to win great prizes, including, as always, a kayak and the Regions Bank cruiser bike; other great prizes included wine baskets, bags of books, a family game night package and more!



Grand Pediatric Pentathlon participants enjoyed carrying out the five activities—even the Friday Fun Walk, which got a little surprise from Mother Nature that afternoon!

A special thank-you goes out to our Grand Pediatric Pentathlon sponsors – Joe Piper, Inc.; Medical Association of the State of Alabama; All About Books; Ike's Beach

Rentals; Fair Advantage Consortium; My Care Alabama; Troy Bank & Trust; Alabama Academy of Family Physicians; Fruit of the Loom; Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network; Jackson Thornton; River Bank & Trust; Read Write Baldwin County; and Wind Creek.

Since its inception, the Grand Pediatric Pentathlon has raised more than \$123,000 for Reach Out and Read-Alabama. Read more at [roralabama.org/grand-pediatric-pentathlon](http://roralabama.org/grand-pediatric-pentathlon).

ROR-AL hosts roundtable at Spring Meeting and rolls out quarterly calls

Twenty pediatric healthcare providers joined ROR-AL staff for a roundtable discussion about the program and to learn more about how their practices can join or improve their programs. We will also begin hosting quarterly calls for our program sites focused on resources and trainings.





## The Resource Every Parent Needs

The Parenting Assistance Line (PAL) is a free service available to anyone who wants information and support in becoming a more confident parent or caregiver. If you have a parenting question or just need a sympathetic ear, give us a call, text or visit our website to chat online.

866-962-3030

PAL.UA.EDU



Parenting Assistance Line

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®



## LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

### Dr. Whitley's impact on child health recognized through APS's Howland Award

*By Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP, Katharine Reynolds Ireland Chair of Pediatrics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine; Physician in Chief, Children's of Alabama*



Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP

The 2022 American Pediatric Society (APS) Howland Award was presented to Richard Whitley, MD, FAAP, at the Pediatric Academic Societies meeting in Denver this April. Dr. Whitley's leadership in the field of pediatrics and his research accomplishments led to his award. A video about Dr. Whitley can be found

at the APS website at <https://www.aps1888.org/>.

His lifetime of work as a clinician, an educator, and an investigator has touched countless lives, both of patients near and far and of medical students, residents, fellows, and colleagues around the world. Many pediatricians in Alabama and from far away have consulted Dr. Whitley by phone during his 50 years at UAB. Similarly, pediatric infectious disease physicians from across the country and the world have asked for his help, especially in diagnosing and treating neonatal viral infections.

A prime example of Dr. Whitley's impact on child health can be seen in his conceptualization and establishment in the early 1970s of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)-funded Collaborative Antiviral Study Group (CASG). With more than 50 collaborating academic centers across the United States, Canada, England, and Sweden, the CASG has defined the treatment and natural history of neonatal herpes simplex virus infections, herpes simplex encephalitis, congenital cytomegalovirus disease, and varicella-zoster virus infections in immunocompromised children. It has furthered our understanding of other viral infections including influenza, enterovirus, hantavirus, and West Nile virus.

By developing this international collaborative model in the 1970s, Dr. Whitley also influenced the design and establishment of successful multicenter consortia for the study of HIV and other infections in the 1980s and beyond. As we move through the second decade of the 21st century, the CASG stands as the longest running of all clinical trial networks at NIAID. CASG has published over 300 journal articles based on study data, including 21 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 6 in *JAMA*,

and 4 in *The Lancet*.

Through his experiences in developing and leading the CASG, Dr. Whitley has identified the challenges common to all pediatric clinical and translational research endeavors, including the need for a network of linked IRBs to facilitate research in rare and emerging infections. When Dr. Whitley established the CASG, the only antiviral drug approved for use in the U.S. was amantadine for influenza. In meticulously assessing the therapeutic benefits of acyclovir (neonatal herpes simplex virus, varicella zoster virus in the immunocompromised host), ganciclovir/valganciclovir (congenital cytomegalovirus), and other antiviral drugs, Dr. Whitley has "created a future" for pediatrics and for children where one did not exist before – i.e., in the treatment of viral infections when previously there were none, in establishing the framework within which multi-institutional studies could be conducted in rare pediatric diseases, and in tirelessly advocating for child health at the national level.

More recently, as the Principal Investigator of a Center of Excellence in Translational Research, Dr. Whitley's research has branched out to include the development of antiviral agents for emerging infections. Through this grant as well as collaborators at Vanderbilt and UNC, much of the groundwork was performed on remdesivir to treat SARS-CoV2. Further, he has played a critical role in the development of oncolytic herpes simplex viruses for the treatment of brain tumors, illustrating the classic principle of bench to bedside and back to the bench.

UAB and Children's of Alabama are proud to have Dr. Whitley continue to serve as Vice Chair of Pediatrics and Co-Director of the Division of Infectious Diseases.

### USA Pediatrics: Congratulations to our 2022 Nappie nominees

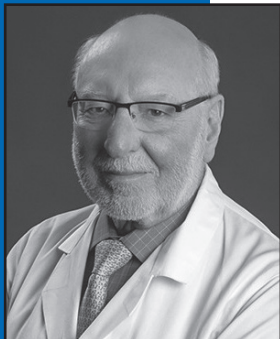
*By David Gremse, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Alabama*



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

Positive feedback from patients, parents and families is among the joys we experience as pediatricians. An annual tradition in the Mobile Bay Area is the Nappie Awards. Sponsored for the past 17 years by Lagniappe, a local weekly paper, the Nappies give the community an opportunity to nominate and vote on

**continued on page 12**



Richard Whitley, MD, FAAP

## Early Career Physicians: your first 10 years in practice and your role in the AAP

By Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP



Nola Jean Ernest, MD,  
PhD, FAAP

Imposter syndrome is defined as an internal experience of believing that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be. It is common in pediatricians, especially those in their early career. Think about it - you were able to secure your first job out of residency, but, now, people expect you to know things. You are suddenly expected not only to know how to diagnose and manage a patient but also how to lead a team, have an expert opinion about potty training, and, in some cases, help run a business. For the first ten years of your career, it can feel like you are constantly trying to play catch up. It can be hard to believe that you really are an expert, capable of doing all of these things and more.

First, the bad news: imposter syndrome does not ever completely go away. It changes throughout your career, but it will still be lurking in the shadows.

Now, the good news: there are things you can do about it. That is where the American Academy of Pediatrics and your Alabama Chapter come into play. Congratulations! Your receipt of this newsletter means you are already a member and are taking the first steps to combatting imposter syndrome.

The next step to take full advantage of your membership is to get involved. There are several ways that you can get involved with the Alabama Chapter:

- 1) Learn. You have probably heard by now that our next chapter-wide meeting will be at the beautiful Ross Bridge Resort in Birmingham in September. This meeting, along with our annual spring CME event, offer great opportunities for you to refine your skills. The topics covered range from leadership to helping parents to how to run a business, and, of course, the latest in the diagnosis and management of diseases. However, meetings ALSO offer an opportunity to network with other physicians who can remind you that you are not alone and help you remember that you are, indeed, an expert.
- 2) Advocate. The Alabama Chapter offers many opportunities to

advocate on behalf of your patients. As a member, you will receive Action Alert emails when there is a pressing piece of legislation that needs your voice. Often, you can lend that voice simply by placing a phone call or emailing your state legislators. You can also join us in person for our annual Legislative Day to learn more about the advocacy efforts of the Chapter, be trained in advocacy, and meet with your legislators as a group.

- 3) Serve. Once you learn that you are not alone and other pediatricians face the same challenges as you, you may feel a desire to help your fellow pediatricians along their journey. To do so, you can join a committee, join a Chapter project, run for Area Representative on the Executive Board, and so much more! Simply send an email to me or Linda Lee indicating your area of interest and we will find a place for you.
- 4) Reach out and ask questions. Finally, your Chapter leadership is here to support you. If you have a question, reach out to me, another board member or Linda Lee and we will do our best to answer. If we cannot answer it, we will connect you with a pediatrician who can. You can also reach out to us if you are passionate about a specific topic – for example, a subject you would like to see discussed at our next CME meeting or an issue that you feel can be addressed legislatively – and we'll be your team and help guide you on the next steps.

One additional way that the Chapter helps with imposter syndrome is by reminding you that you are amazing! To assist with this effort, every quarter, we publish an article to shine a spotlight on the accomplishments of one early career pediatrician in Alabama. Going forward, in order to make sure we are learning about pediatricians from all over the state, these articles will be written by each of our Area Representatives. Next quarter, we will learn more about an early career physician from Area 1 (north Alabama). If you are a pediatrician in this area who would like to be spotlighted, or if you KNOW of a pediatrician in this area that you would like to sponsor, please send your/their information along to Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, Area 1 Representative, at [kymd27@gmail.com](mailto:kymd27@gmail.com).

And, as always, thank you for all you do for the children of Alabama!



## NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

As many of you may have heard, the CDC is investigating reports of unexplained hepatitis in children. Originally reported in Alabama, there are now at least 180 reports from 36 states in addition to reports outside the U.S.

Of the nine children originally identified in the cluster in Alabama, all were positive for adenovirus and most for adenovirus type 41. These were previously healthy children and no other cause has been identified for their hepatitis. All these children had severe disease and two progressed to liver transplant. Adenovirus type 41 induced hepatitis has been previously identified in immunosuppressed children, but not in otherwise healthy children. Since the original cluster was described, three additional reports of cases have been received bringing the total number in Alabama to 12.

An extensive epidemiologic evaluation is ongoing; to date, no links between the cases in Alabama have been identified. Adenovirus 41 induced hepatitis has not been conclusively causally linked to the cases but remains the dominant theory among experts. It is also uncertain if it is direct injury due to the virus or a post-viral immune response.

Providers are encouraged to consider hepatitis in ill children, especially those with clinical signs. If hepatitis is identified and meets the criteria for reporting (ALT or AST >500), adenoviral testing should also be considered in the differential diagnosis. Regardless, all cases of hepatitis of unknown etiology in children less than 10 years of age should be reported to ADPH via the link in the

## Let's Hear It From Our Departments of Pediatrics! continued from page 10

their favorites in more than 300 categories. It is a popular competition every year, and for the 2022 Nappies, more than 150,000 votes have been cast.

In the category of Best Pediatric Specialist, four of the six nominees are members of the USA Health Department of Pediatrics. Lynn Batten, MD, FACC, FAAP, Professor and Director of the USA Division of Pediatric Cardiology, Anne-Marie Kaulfers, MD, FAAP, Professor and Director of the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology, Athira Nair, MD, Assistant Professor in the Division of Pediatric Cardiology, and Stephanie Anderson, MD, FAAP, Assistant Professor and Director of the Division of Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics, were all nominated for this year's Nappies.

In the category of Best Pediatrician, eight of the 10 nominees hold adjunct faculty appointments with the USA Health Department of Pediatrics. These outstanding pediatricians include Savannah Browning, MD, FAAP, Matthew Cepeda, MD, FAAP, Jonathan Holmes, MD, FAAP, Robin McNair, MD, Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP, Michael Little, DO, Alfred Shearer, MD, FAAP, and Nancy Wood, MD, FAAP.

Please join me in congratulating these pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists who have made such an impact on the children and families in our community.

## Practice Management Association update

*By Gena Allen, PMA Chair*

The Practice Management Association is excited to announce the topics and speakers for our Practice Management Workshop on Friday, September 9, which will offer in-person attendance at Ross Bridge Resort in Birmingham as well as via Zoom! These sessions (see list below) are geared to both pediatricians AND practice managers and their staffs.

Mark your calendars, and look for the registration information coming out in the next couple of weeks!

Meanwhile, make sure that your practice manager is a member of the PMA. He or she can sign up on the Chapter website and begin networking with managers across the state, especially through our valuable practice management listserv. Visit <https://www.alaap.org/practice-management-association-who-we-are>.

### 2022 Practice Management Workshop - Topics and Speakers

- Delivering on Your Practice Culture—Chip Hart, PCC
- Regulatory Update on Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine—Brandy Boone, JD, General Counsel, Medical Association of the State of Alabama
- Alabama Medicaid in 2020: What Pediatricians and their Staffs Need to Know—Christopher Stanley, MD, and Barry Cambron, Alabama Medicaid Agency
- Alabama Pediatric Practice Management Hot Topics
- The Magic of Tidying Up: Simplify Your Life and Practice to Find More Joy—Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Fairhope Pediatrics
- Newborn Screening Update: What's New & Latest Pediatric Recommendations for Hearing Screening & Follow-Up—DeeAnne Jackson, MD, FAAP; Mary Whigham, Alabama Department of Public Health

## NEWS FROM MEDICAID

### How you can help with the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) unwinding

Enacted in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), the 2020 Families First Coronavirus Response Act includes a requirement allowing continuous coverage for Medicaid recipients in exchange for an increased FMAP rate to the Agency. The Agency will begin notifying recipients by U.S. mail once Health & Human Services (HHS) announces the end of the PHE and it is time to renew.

Several Medicaid partner agencies and groups have asked us how they can help communicate the impact that redetermination will have on Medicaid recipients once normal operations resume. Alabama Medicaid recipients will need to know what to expect and what action they must take in order to keep their benefits. Medicaid partners can assist the Agency by relaying the following message to the recipients they serve:

- You must renew your Medicaid every year. Stay up to date about changes that can affect your benefits. Update your mailing address and other information with the Alabama Medicaid Agency as soon as possible to be notified.

The Agency has already (and will continue to) provide messaging to Medicaid recipients updating them on any program or coverage changes related to the PHE. However, it is important that we all work together to ensure recipients keep their coverage active by updating their mailing address and other personal information in order to receive further information related to the end of the continuous coverage requirement.

In March 2022, the Agency began a communications campaign for recipients stating the importance of updating their address in order to receive notice of any changes to their Medicaid benefits. Without the most up-to-date mailing addresses, recipients could miss important renewal information, which may result in cancellation of their coverage.

The Agency began the “Yellow Postcard Campaign” in May to relay this message to recipients. Yellow postcards include recipient messaging about how to update an address, and they are distributed to provider offices and pharmacies through academic detailers. Postcards are posted in Medicaid district offices, outstation worker offices, FQHCs, RHCs, and public health departments. Additional support during the campaign comes from ACHN care coordinators, waiver case managers, and caseworkers with partner agencies who display the postcards at their workstations.

The Agency asks providers, pharmacies, and other stakeholders to assist us in this effort by posting the yellow postcard at check-in or checkout counters. When Medicaid recipients check in or check out for their appointments, they can scan the QR code at the top of the form and take a digital version of the information with them.

In addition to the Yellow Postcard Campaign, the Agency has developed partner resources, including the “Medicaid Partner Toolkit,” that provides messaging for recipients to be used by providers, stakeholders, and community partners. As Alabama prepares to return to normal, we encourage partners to use the messaging within the partner toolkit, as well as the yellow postcard, to assist with your own outreach efforts.

For more COVID-related information for providers and partners, please visit [www.Medicaid.Alabama.gov](http://www.Medicaid.Alabama.gov) and select the Providers tab, COVID-19 Information for Providers.

### News from public health continued from page 12

HAN released on 4/21/2022. Each report will be evaluated, investigated, and shared with the CDC. Please see the links below for more information.

<https://bit.ly/3xuAGcm>

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## CHAPTER BRIEFS

## Landers receives 2022 William Henry Sanders Award



Karen Landers, MD, FAAP

The William Henry Sanders Award is a distinguished award presented by the Medical Association of the State of Alabama to an outstanding person, lay or professional, engaged in full-time public health work, but who has served above and beyond the call of duty. The award was created in 1966 in honor of Williams Henry Sanders, MD, who served as Alabama's State Health Officer from 1896 to 1917.

One of two recipients this year was our own Karen Landers, MD, FAAP. Dr. Landers has served the Alabama Department of Public Health in various capacities for more than 39 years. Al.com stated "Dr. Landers has become a key public figure as the state battles COVID-19. Her calm demeanor and straightforward answers have been a reassuring voice amid the changing health landscape." She was nominated as one of WHNT News19 TV's Remarkable Women.

She also was bestowed the UAB Department of Pediatrics' Wallace Clyde Award in 2021. She has been a tremendous resource to the Chapter for many years, and continues to represent children's needs in her role at ADPH.

Congratulations, Dr. Landers!

## Two pediatricians elected to Medical Association positions



Nina Ford Johnson, MD, FAAP

Congratulations to two Chapter members who have been elected to positions within the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, where they will represent pediatrics as well as their local medical communities.

Nina Ford Johnson, MD, FAAP, of Mobile, has been elected as Vice President of MASA. Dr. Johnson has been heavily involved in her County Medical Society, and also represents the Chapter on the Medical Care Advisory Committee and previously served on the Chapter Nominating Committee.

Marquisha Jarmon, MD, FAAP, who provides comprehensive pediatrics and internal medicine care at her practice in Hoover, has been elected to the At Large, Place No. 2 position on the Medical



Marquisha Jarmon, MD, FAAP

Association's Council on Medical Service. Dr. Jarmon is seen regularly at our Chapter conferences and will be a great addition to this advisory body at MASA.

Congratulations to both of these pediatricians—well deserved!

## McCain appointed to AAP Committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine



Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP

In late May, the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Pediatrics voted to appoint Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, UAB Pediatric Emergency Medicine and Area 3 Representative on the Alabama Chapter-AAP Executive Board, to the Committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine. As an appointed Member of an AAP National Committee (effective July 1, 2022), she will serve a six-year term, contingent on Board reappointment every 2 years.

This appointment is a reflection of Dr. McCain's commitment to children and the mission of the AAP and the AL-AAP.

Congratulations, Dr. McCain!

Last call: 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. This year, the Chapter Executive Board voted to add the Early Career Physician Award to its list of annual awards; we are very excited to have the opportunity 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 llee@alaap.org by the end of June (extended from June 15).

- Criteria for Carden Johnston Leadership Award - <https://bit.ly/3MeTukc>
- Criteria for Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award - <https://bit.ly/3H2scN3>
- Criteria for Early Career Physician Award - <https://bit.ly/3zfl60R>





# ***BACK TO SCHOOL TIME***

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# Alabama Chapter

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