



The Alabama Pediatrician

Fourth Quarter 2021

From the President

Parents have peace of mind when receiving vaccine from their pediatrician



Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP
Chapter President

Happy Holidays! I am so thankful for each of you and the work you continue to do for the children of Alabama. I know that you, like many parents in our practices, are very thankful that our younger pediatric patients are now able to be vaccinated against COVID-19

with the approval of the vaccine for the 5-11 year old age group. The Chapter has provided several resources to help you add this immunization into your workflow. As your patients' families' trusted source for health information, providing this vaccine in your office decreases vaccine hesitancy and increases immunization rates in your community. Administering the vaccine can be added seamlessly to your other vaccine workflow and doesn't require special storage equipment. You can find answers to the most common questions and concerns about COVID-19 vaccination in the primary care setting by checking out the resources from your AL-AAP.

If you aren't vaccinating yet, please get started. As the vaccine is approved for even younger ages, it will be even more important to provide parents with the peace of mind of receiving their children's vaccines from their favorite pediatrician, not the local retail pharmacy. Take advantage of this opportunity to build trust and good will with your patients and enroll now as a COVID-19 vaccine provider for your patients. We are here to help you get started.

The Chapter's 2021 Annual Meeting attendees enjoy practice management pearls, top-notch educational sessions, special awards dinner

In late September, pediatricians and other healthcare providers from across the state gathered together for much-needed camaraderie and education at the Chapter's Annual Meeting and Fall Pediatric Update at a new venue, the Sheraton Birmingham. The conference featured a Friday practice management workshop, a medical liability/risk management workshop by ProAssurance, a Chapter business meeting on Saturday, and the annual awards dinner in association with Children's of Alabama.

"Great conference with useful and thought-provoking information," noted an attendee on the evaluations. "Every presentation was relevant and important."

Sessions included talks on COVID-19 in children, trauma and early childhood, diversity, and infectious diseases, among others.

At the Children's of Alabama/UAB/Chapter Awards Dinner, Chapter President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, recognized several individuals for their outstanding work, including:

AL-AAP 2021 Legislative Heroes, Alabama Speaker of the House Mac McCutcheon and Alabama Representative Mike Jones

- In recognition of their leadership and tireless efforts in support of the health and safety of Alabama's children;
- Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, AL-AAP Secretary-Treasurer and pediatrician at Charles Henderson Child Health Center, as the 2021 recipient of the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award,**



Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, (far left) along with Brooke Goar, MD, FAAP, (third from left) and Katrina Roberson-Trammell, MD, FAAP, (not pictured) were part of a panel discussion with their school nurse counterparts on improving communication between the two disciplines.



In a post-conference meeting, Chapter Executive Director Linda Lee, APR, and Chapter Lobbyist Graham Champion present a 2021 Legislative Hero award to Speaker of the House Mac McCutcheon (center), who was unable to attend the Annual Meeting.



Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, (right) accepts the 2021 Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award from Chapter President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP.

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Chapter Office and Staff Alabama Chapter – AAP

- Linda P. Lee, APR
Executive Director
- Linda M. Champion, MPA
Project Coordinator
- Jill H. Powell
Meeting and Membership
Coordinator
- Amy S. Crosby,
ROR State Coordinator
- Salina T. Sowell
ROR Program/
Communications Coordinator

19 S. Jackson St.
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 954-2543
Toll-free (866) 293-4783
Fax: (334) 269-5200
llee@alaap.org
www.alaap.org

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.

COVID vaccine available for children ages 5-11 after ACIP recommendation

Chapter develops “4 Steps for Alabama Pediatricians to Begin Providing the COVID Vaccine,” updates toolkit to assist members

On Nov. 2, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved a recommendation for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine’s use in children ages 5 to 11. This recommendation followed the Food and Drug Administration’s October 26 approval of the vaccine for that age group.

This new pediatric formulation is available throughout the state, with previous COVID vaccine providers receiving orders in the first round. The vaccine for children is a smaller dose and is given as a 2-dose series, three weeks apart.

A few important points about this new pediatric formulation:

- **The new pediatric vaccine comes in much smaller lots of 100;**
- **Ultra-cold storage is not needed if used in 10 weeks; and**
- **There is no cost for the vaccine and its administration is reimbursed up to \$40, even for the uninsured.**

The Alabama Chapter-AAP encourages all pediatric medical homes to incorporate the vaccine into their workflows; to that end, the Chapter has encapsulated the process of becoming an active COVID vaccine provider into “4 steps” with links to resources for each step. This two-pager, “4 Steps for Alabama Pediatricians to Begin Providing the COVID Vaccine,” has a set of resources on page 2 that provide more background to make you successful. Scan the QR code to access the document.

In addition, the AL-AAP COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit is now updated with the 4-step document and many other resources, including:

- AAP Policy Statements and FDA panel reports
- Recordings of two webinars with ADPH staff and David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases
- Links for parents
- CDC toolkit links for pediatric healthcare professionals
- AAP Talking Points
- CDC’s side by side comparison of the adult and pediatric formulations (preliminary)
- ADPH COVID Vaccine Page
- AAP free online provider course on addressing hesitancy: Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations
- Myocarditis Q&A
- Other vaccine hesitancy resources
- Social media posts
- And much more...

To access the toolkit, visit <https://www.alaap.org/covid19-vaccine-uptake-toolkit>.



It is our time to shine

by Benjamin Estrada, MD, FAAP, Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, University of South Alabama College of Medicine and David Kimberlin MD, FAAP, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine



Benjamin Estrada, MD,
FAAP



David Kimberlin, MD,
FAAP

During the last two years, we have been both witnesses and protagonists to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Medical practitioners with all levels of experience have had the opportunity to review and apply previously and newly learned concepts in epidemiology, virology, immunology, and other areas. More importantly, many of us have experienced firsthand the devastating societal and personal effects of the pandemic. During this challenging time, science has led us to find the etiology of an infectious disease that just two years ago was unknown. We now

have effective diagnostics and therapeutics that have reduced morbidity and mortality and interventions that mitigate and prevent SARS-COV-2 infections, including highly effective and safe vaccines.

Humanity now has the tools to allow for survival and fast adaptation against this virus. However, the effectiveness of these tools can be severely diminished without willing participants. As medical providers who take care of children, we must realize that if we are to defeat COVID-19, we have a crucial role in advocating for the delivery of accurate information to our community and in implementing effective preventative interventions that include vaccinating those children who are eligible.

With the availability of mRNA vaccines for children 5-18 years old, we are now at that pivotal point. We all know that children become sick and have suffered significant physical illness and psychosocial stress because of the pandemic. COVID-19 was listed as the 8th cause of pediatric death in 2020, and an even larger number of children have been critically ill and hospitalized with this infection either acutely or because of the development of multisystem inflammatory syndrome. Although it is true that most infected children are asymptomatic or develop a mild illness, it is also true that they can be effective in transmitting the virus within their families and their communities, impacting those who are at higher risk of developing severe disease and associated complications. The monumental effects of the pandemic have resulted in the inability to attend school for millions of American children, many of whom have also suffered the psychological consequences of the lack of socialization and normal childhood interactions in traditional learning environments. All these negative consequences of COVID-19 could be minimized by the timely, widespread, and consistent administration of the available vaccines.

The logistics of vaccine administration for pediatric patients require a shift from the strategy used during the last year of immunizing older individuals. Rather than the massive community drive-through sites used for adult vaccinations, the most appropriate and effective setting to vaccinate children is their primary care provider's office or, if possible, other non-traditional settings, such as schools, if allowed by parents and school administrators.

As pediatricians participating in this endeavor, we need to be cognizant of the advantages that our office settings offer in the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination for children. These include the following: 1) parents have a relationship of trust with their pediatrician, 2) pediatricians are experts in immunizations strategies, 3) pediatric practices are widespread and convenient, 4) pediatricians are effective educators who can debunk myths and misinformation about the vaccines at the point of care, 5) pediatricians know their patient's medical history, 6) pediatricians are attuned to the positive psychosocial and educational effects of reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases, and 7) as has been the case in the past with many other infections, over the years to come, young children will continue to be immunologically naïve to SARS-COV-2 until they become exposed, which will require long-term planning and strategies to vaccinate this perpetually at-risk population.

Before the pandemic, pediatricians had been recognized for years as medical experts in the delivery of vaccines. Now our communities and our country need our expertise more than ever. Our time to shine is now!

How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

President

Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 928-5568
katski@bellsouth.net

Vice President/President-elect
Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 308-1166
nola.ernest@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer
Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 566-7600
nelso71@hotmail.com

Immediate Past President
Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH, FAAP
Ph: (256) 764-9522
stubblefield.wes@gmail.com

Area 1 Rep. (Huntsville)
Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP
Ph: (256) 265-4982
kymd27@gmail.com

Area 2 Rep. (Tuscaloosa)
Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 348-1304
spcecil@cchs.ua.edu

Area 3 Rep. (Birmingham)
Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 870-1273
jennifer.mccain@childrensal.org

Area 4 Rep. (Sylacauga)
Leslie Sawyer, MD, FAAP
Ph: (256) 208-0060
lsawyer@pathwayped.com

Area 5 Rep. (Montgomery)
Melissa McNally, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 272-1799
mcnallymd@yahoo.com

Area 6 Rep. (Mobile)
Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 344-7044
drmobley@mobileped.com

CME Chair

Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 434-3401
hcustodio@health.southalabama.edu

UAB Pediatric Residency Program Rep.

Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 638-9922
csmola@ped.southalabama.edu

USA Pediatric Residency Program Rep.

LaDonna Crews, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 434-3917
lmcrews1@aol.com

Chadalawada named Master Pediatrician, Kimberlin honored with Wallace Clyde award

Recognizing outstanding accomplishments and dedication to the practice of general pediatrics, the Children's of Alabama Master Pediatrician has been awarded since 1991. Many long-time Chapter members have earned this distinction, and this year, Chapter member Rekha Chadalawada, MD, FAAP, of Sylacauga Pediatrics has joined her colleagues on the list.

Dr. Chadalawada attained her medical degree at Rangaraya Medical College in Kakinada, India, and completed her residency at Woodhull Medical and Mental Health Center and the University of New York in Brooklyn. She joined Sylacauga Pediatrics and opened a second site, Summit Pediatrics, in the Chelsea area in 2014. Dr. "Rekha" is a lifelong advocate of health and wellness for children and has taught multiple classes in obesity, diet and exercise, and has served as a role model for her community.

The Wallace Alexander Clyde, M.D. Distinguished Service Award was established in 1984 by the UAB Department of Pediatrics and Children's as a means of recognizing outstanding physicians who have devoted a lifetime of service to children and their families. This year, David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, the Sergio Stagno Endowed Chair in Pediatric Infectious



David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP

Diseases at UAB and co-director of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, was honored with the award for his work in pediatric infectious disease research and patient care.

Dr. Kimberlin is editor of the 2021 AAP *Red Book* and has served as editor and associate editor of previous editions. Since 2007, he has served as the AAP *Red Book* liaison to the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of children and the importance of vaccinations, and has served as an expert on related issues with the Chapter for many years.

Well-deserved, Drs. Chadalawada and Kimberlin!



The year's Master Pediatrician recipient, Rekha Chadalawada, MD, FAAP, accepts the Master Pediatrician jacket of distinction from previous Master Pediatrician recipient Michael Ramsey, MD, FAAP

Annual Meeting continued from page 1

in recognition of her:

- In-person and media advocacy on behalf of pediatricians for the right to prescribe evidence-based care to transgender youth
- Educating her community at large on adverse childhood experiences and helping to inform policy
- Founding and currently serving as the president of the non-profit Troy Resilience Project.
- Advocacy on Medicaid and other issues related to rural pediatrics
- Service to the Chapter for more than seven years

Katrina Roberson-Trammell, MD, FAAP, USA Pediatrics

- In recognition of her tireless efforts in bridging the gap between pediatricians and school nurses

Grant R. Allen, MD, FAAP, Infants' & Children's Clinic, Florence

- In recognition of his vision and efforts to make positive impacts on the child death review system across Alabama
- ### Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, UAB Pediatrics
- In recognition of her continued advocacy for transgender children

In addition, District X special achievement awards were presented to Karen Landers, MD, FAAP, Alabama Department of Public Health; Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, pediatrician with Children's of Alabama Emergency Department; Wes Stubblefield, MD, FAAP, Alabama Department of Public Health; Dr. Dawson; Susan Walley, MD, FAAP, pediatrician formerly with UAB/Children's of Alabama; and Dr. Skinner, current president of the Chapter.

The festivities concluded with Children's awarding of its Master Pediatrician and Wallace Clyde awards (see sidebar story).

Chapter Executive Board welcomes new member

The Alabama Chapter-AAP Executive Board is delighted to welcome Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and pediatrician at The University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences in Tuscaloosa, to the Alabama Chapter-AAP Executive Board! Dr. Cecil assumed the role of Area 2 representative on October 1, through which he will represent pediatricians and pediatric healthcare providers in the western/northwestern portion of Alabama. (See our Early Career Pediatrician Spotlight on page 10 for more information on Dr. Cecil!).



Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP

We are also happy to have Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, of Huntsville, assume another term as Area 1 Representative (north Alabama region).

"We also thank outgoing board member Dr. Sudha Bennuri for his years of service and faithful dedication to the Chapter," said Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, Chapter President. "We encourage members to reach out to our board members for ideas and support throughout this next year. We are here for you."

For a list of current board members, see page 3.

Next level improvements for child health outcomes: ACHIA's Longitudinal Data Network Pilot

In 2022, the Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) will pilot a Longitudinal Data Network (LDN) to support its vision that Alabama children achieve optimal health outcomes. The LDN is a companion program to ACHIA's collaborative model. Practices commonly meet improvement goals while participating in a collaborative, but not all practices can monitor sustained gains over time. The LDN will close that gap.



Pediatric Quality Improvement Collaboratives

Since 2009, 272 pediatricians across Alabama have furthered child health by participating in QI collaboratives. This evidence-based format allows practices to test whether change ideas lead to improved processes and outcomes. (See the QI Teamspace www.achia.org for more information on learning collaboratives). The topics tackled are core to pediatric care. Some issues, such as early screening and referrals, have been available repeatedly.

What the LDN adds

The LDN helps practices sustain gains made during collaboratives as well as identify opportunities for improvement.

The LDN pilot focus is health supervision visits and vaccination rates. Participating practices can compare their rates with aggregated ACHIA LDN practices and the state rates. Practices need not participate in each collaborative to be in the network; however, those who take part in the #StayWell2022: Teen Vaccine QI Collaborative will be able to track if their vaccine rate improvements are sustained for years to come.

Unlike collaboratives, the office staff does not collect longitudinal data. Claims data are utilized in the pilot, and ACHIA will incorporate chart abstractors in the future for richer child health insights.

Similar to practices working in collaboratives, ACHIA benefits from “peer-to-peer learning” with other state Improvement Partnerships across the country. The Vermont Child Health Improvement Partnership's CHAMP (Child Health Advances Measured in Practice) network has shared how they grew over the last decade from an idea into a network in which most practices serving Vermont children participate. The CHAMP annual report captures a broad swath of vital child health outcomes not available through claims data alone, including breastfeeding rates, blood pressure documentation and hypertension status, food security, and lead levels. In addition to helping practices assess strengths and opportunities, the CHAMP reports are critical resources for agencies interested in child health, such as the Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Next Steps

Jeremiah Bell, MPH, Program Manager with the UAB School of Public Health Applied Evaluation and Assessment Collaborative (AEAC), is shepherding the Longitudinal Data Network pilot, housed in the AEAC. Work in the first part of 2022 will hone the data collection processes. In the second half of the year, ACHIA and AEAC will be engaging with the inaugural LDN practices to design the reports. We are also looking for a catchy name like CHAMP - suggestions invited!

For more information, contact Jeremiah at jzb0031@uab.edu or Cason Benton, MD, FAAP, at ebenton@uabmc.edu.

Legislative Update

By Graham L. Champion,
Chapter Lobbyist

The 2022 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature will start on Jan. 11, 2022. Based on the experience we had during the most recent Special Session of the Legislature, the Regular Session is going to be very busy and contentious. A number of bills have already been prefiled that attack the practice of medicine and the health and safety of the children we care for.

Working in close collaboration with Niko Corley and the Medical Association of the State of Alabama lobbying/government affairs team, we were able to defeat efforts to add criminal penalties to the vaccine passport legislation that has become a major problem for pediatric practices across Alabama. This collaboration with the Medical Association was incredibly helpful and important in our success.

The prompt response of our pediatricians and your outreach to members of the legislature made a huge difference.

As we go into 2022, it is imperative that for us to be successful, the Chapter membership and staff must continue the working relationship forged during this year's second Special Session. While our focus is on pediatrics, having a unified voice with all physicians benefits our goals and healthcare for all Alabamians. In addition, hometown relationships matter and each member of the Chapter can and will make a difference as we work together in these next few weeks and months.

Past Collaborative Topics

- Obesity prevention and treatment
- Asthma management
- Teen well visits
 - Consent/Confidentiality
 - Transition to Adult Care
- HPV vaccination
- Early screening and Referrals
 - Development
 - Autism
 - Social-emotional

Reach Out and Read All About It!

Encouraging parent–child book-sharing: potential additive benefits of literacy promotion in health care and the community

Children from low-income families are more likely than their higher income peers to show delays in language and literacy skills, both at school entry and across the lifespan. Programs aimed at promoting language and literacy activities in the home, particularly programs that combine distribution of print materials with support and guidance for using them, have been effective in decreasing the word gap, leading to increased school readiness and early literacy.

The current study examined the impact of such a program based in pediatric healthcare, Reach Out and Read (ROR), on parents' use of community resources that also provide access to print – namely, the public library – in the context of a citywide initiative to link literacy resources for low-income families. Effects of both ROR and the library, both individually and combined, on parents' literacy activities at home were then examined. Significant associations between receiving ROR, using the public library, and parent-child book-sharing were found. Read more at <https://bit.ly/3nLmxTx>.

15 years...one story at a time

Reach Out and Read-Alabama has been telling stories for the past 15 years, sharing with millions of children and families how the simple act of reading aloud together helps create a lasting emotional connection, stimulates a child's cognitive development, and lays the groundwork for a lifelong love of reading and learning. We promote healthy interactions – between caregiver and child, as well as between caregiver and provider – that ensure children receive the compassionate attention they need to thrive. We aspire to give every family a book at each well-child visit.

“We had a young child present to the clinic with high anxiety and apprehension about

healthcare. She did not want our provider to touch her or let us get her weight, height, etc. Our provider read *Leo Goes to the Doctor* to the child and asked if she could

listen to her chest like Leo did in the book. After a few seconds of thought, she let our provider complete an assessment,” said Beth Edwards, site coordinator at Accordia Health. “I think this speaks volumes of why Reach Out and Read-Alabama is so important in the primary care setting. Thank



you for allowing us to be a part of this great program!”

Help us continue to the next chapter with your donation today by scanning the QR code.

The EARLY Lab at Auburn University kicks off partnership with two Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites

The EARLY Lab at Auburn University, in collaboration with Reach Out and Read-Alabama, is committed to supporting early literacy and parent-infant relational health.

Through a partnership with Dothan Pediatric Clinic and Pediatric Clinic, LLC, the Early Lab is conducting a study of parent-infant book-sharing practices and parents' perceptions of the ROR program. As part of the collaborative project, the EARLY Lab provided a total of 1,000 infant books to each clinic, as well as high-impact posters elevating the project's central message: Book-sharing builds brains and relationships.

Each clinic will also receive colorful refrigerator magnets featuring the project's logo and encouraging parents to “Share Books With Your Baby!” to give to families



The posters being used in the clinics show the variety of ways that parents and caregivers can share books with young infants, while also messaging the literature on shared book reading.

after the four- and six-month well-child visits. Parents are encouraged to participate in a short online survey after the visit. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months!

This project was made possible by a generous grant from the Women's Philanthropy Board at Auburn University. Are you interested in becoming a project site? The EARLY Lab is actively recruiting clinic partnerships. Contact Dr. Cynthia Frosch at caf0060@auburn.edu or Salina Sowell at stsowell@roralabama.org for more information.

Lee County District Attorney and Tuscaloosa County District Attorney offices team up with Reach Out and Read-Alabama to beat illiteracy

In the spirit of Iron Bowl competition, the Lee and Tuscaloosa county district attorney's offices “teamed up” with Reach Out and Read-Alabama (ROR-AL) to not only try to beat one another in the state's biggest rivalry,



FLU & PNEU FACTS

Flu & Pneu Vaccines Reduce Illnesses, Doctor Visits, Hospitalizations, Missed Work & School.

MAKE A STRONG VACCINE RECOMMENDATION

As a health care professional, your strong recommendation is a critical factor that affects whether your patients get an influenza (flu) and pneumococcal (pneu) vaccine. Follow up with each patient during all appointments to ensure the patient received a flu and pneu vaccine.

CDC suggests using the SHARE method to make a strong vaccine recommendation and provide important information to help patients make informed decisions about vaccinations:

SHARE the reasons why flu and pneu vaccines are right for the patient given his or her age, health status, lifestyle, occupation, or other risk factors.

HIGHLIGHT positive experiences with flu and pneu vaccines (personal or in your practice), to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccines.

ADDRESS patient questions and any concerns about the flu and pneu vaccines, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.

REMIND patients that flu and pneu vaccines protect them and their loved ones from serious illness and complications.

EXPLAIN the potential costs of getting flu and pneumococcal disease, including serious health effects, time lost (such as missing work or family obligations), and financial costs.

USE THE S.H.A.R.E. APPROACH TO FIGHT FLU AND PNEUMONIA.

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LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

Introducing the McDonald Scholars Program

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

We are delighted to announce the McDonald Scholars program honoring the legacy of pediatrician Dr. H. Jack McDonald and his wife, Eva Adams McDonald. The McDonald Scholars program provides a two-week immersion experience in a rural or underserved pediatric practice in Alabama for UAB Pediatric and Internal Medicine-Pediatric residents. The McDonald Family has provided ongoing support for the program and Candice Dye, MD, FAAP, and Michele Nichols, MD, FAAP, lead the program at UAB and Children's of Alabama.

Dr. McDonald, born and raised in West Virginia, moved to Birmingham in 1951 to start his pediatric career. He attained his medical degree in 1946 while enlisted in the U.S. Navy (1946-1949), then completed his internship at Norfolk Naval Hospital and his pediatric residency training at Jefferson-Hillman and Children's Memorial hospitals in Chicago in 1951. Dr. McDonald initially practiced at Carraway Methodist Medical Center in the Norwood Clinic and then later in private practice in the East End Memorial Hospital community of Birmingham.

He provided both outpatient and inpatient care to three generations of pediatric patients, spanning almost 40 years of active, full-time practice. Much of his professional success he credited to his wife of 53 years, whom he met and married soon after moving to Birmingham. Mrs. McDonald was skillful in practice management and they shared a strong passion for improving children's health.

Dr. McDonald was also enthusiastic about teaching. He was a role model and mentor to many medical students and residents as well as nursing and premedical students. He graciously allowed learners to come and participate in clinical rotations in his office.

Each McDonald Scholar will have a two-week clinical experience with the sponsoring pediatric practice as a way to further learn and truly encompass what being a pediatrician in a rural or underserved area entails. For our inaugural program, five residents were selected as Scholars: Claire Cordes, MD, Meg Ingram, MD, Jennifer Joseph, MD, Dan McNeill, MD, and Grace Spears, MD.

There is great interest from pediatric practices across

the state to be a part of the program and sponsor a resident for this experience. So far, participating practices include

Pathway Pediatrics, Enterprise Pediatric Clinic, Marshall County Pediatrics, and Cullman Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. In future years, the goal is to expand the McDonald Scholar Program to eight scholars and additional practices.



USA Pediatrics: Faculty Mentorship Program leads the way toward re-engagement

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



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

The USA Department of Pediatrics appreciates the leadership of Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP, and her passion in creating a mentorship program for pediatric faculty. The need for social distancing, limiting public gatherings, and emphasis on virtual meetings during the pandemic decreases opportunities for fellowship with others, leading to isolation.

One initiative to re-engage the faculty is the mentorship program. Dr. Custodio has designed this program that combines developing one-on-one relationships, which are so meaningful in a mentorship experience, with activities that train participants in giving feedback and career advancement. She does this by creating an atmosphere that is collegial, respectful, and supportive.

As pediatricians, we all appreciate the importance of development and extended families. Mentoring is one way to encourage others to reach their full potential. The USA Department of Pediatrics congratulates Dr. Custodio for her efforts in the creation of this program.

Early Career Spotlight: Dr. Shawn Cecil uses love of teaching to share passion for pediatrics with residents

By Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP, Chapter Early Career Pediatrician Representative



Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP

The University of Alabama is nationally recognized for its winning football team. Closer to home, Tuscaloosa is also known for its excellent pediatricians. The early career pediatrician that we are honored to spotlight this quarter is keeping that tradition alive.

Dr. Shawn Cecil recently joined the faculty of the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa Family Medicine Residency Program. A native of Cullman, Dr. Cecil once dreamed of becoming a high school math teacher. However, by the time he completed medical school at the University of Alabama at Birmingham as part of the Rural Medical Scholars program, he did not envision that his pediatric career would include returning to his medical school to teach. His passion for teaching was rekindled during residency at Arkansas Children's Hospital, which including serving a year as chief resident. So, when he, along with his wife and two daughters, decided to return "home" in 2019, accepting a teaching role seemed a natural fit.

"I love having the chance to work with learners and share my passion of pediatrics with them," states Dr. Cecil of his new role. And, it seems that he has put that passion into good practice.

"When Dr. Cecil joined our faculty at CCHS/UMC-Pediatrics, he instantly became a part of our family. Patients and peers alike have recognized his earnest passion for pediatrics. He is a natural born leader both in the inpatient and outpatient settings, and has also been acknowledged for his exceptional teaching from our residents and medical students. Dr. Cecil takes a proactive approach in his work to serve our campus community as well as the surrounding areas. The University of Alabama campus and greater west Alabama communities are lucky to have him, and we know he will continue to make an immensely positive impact throughout his career," wrote staff at CCHS/UMC.

Since returning to Alabama, Dr. Cecil has also been an active in the Alabama Chapter-AAP (AL-AAP), serving as a participant in the recently completed pediatrician-school nurse collaborative, which resulted in, among other things, a presentation at the Alabama State Board of Education MEGA Conference. In October, he also assumed the role of Area 2 Representative on the Executive Board.

In this time of thanksgiving, we at the Alabama Chapter are grateful that Dr. Cecil returned to Alabama to share his gifts with all of us and look forward to seeing all that he will accomplish throughout his career.

Many thanks to our advertisers

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Alabama Parenting Assistance Line

Alabama Public Health Immunization Division

Children's of Alabama

Ready-Set-Go Gently Parenting

ROR-Alabama continued from page 6

but to beat illiteracy, one book at a time! The two offices raised a total of \$5,981!

While the Tuscaloosa County DA's office won the competition, the real winners are the more than 26,000 children and families served by the two program sites in Lee County (Pediatric Associates of Auburn and Pediatric Clinic, LLC) and the five program sites in Tuscaloosa County (Alabama Multi Specialty Clinic, Bama Pediatrics, Crimson Pediatrics, The University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences and West Alabama Pediatrics).

Each DA office hosted an online book drive from November 1 through November 26 to benefit these ROR-AL programs located in their respective counties. Donations made through the drives will purchase books that pediatricians will prescribe to families to support understanding of their children's developmental milestones.

"Illiteracy is common among individuals in the criminal justice system. Literacy efforts like Reach Out and Read-Alabama is an investment in our children, strong family bonds, and safer communities," said Jessica

Ventiere, Lee County District Attorney. "We appreciate everyone, regardless of who they cheer for, who participated in the Iron Bowl book drive!"

"Thank you to everyone who contributed! We believe that strong families build strong communities and that reading is essential to every child's success," said Hays Webb, Tuscaloosa County District Attorney. "We are glad to compete for this wonderful cause, and we wish everyone a joyous holiday season. Roll Tide!"



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

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Event Calendar

January 13, 2022
AL-AAP Practice Management Association Webinar: The Business of Providing Vaccines 12:15 p.m.

March 10, 2022
AL-AAP Practice Management Association Webinar: Providing Vaccines: Clinical & Workflow Considerations 12:15 p.m.

April 28 – May 1, 2022
2022 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update
The Lodge at Gulf State Park
Gulf Shores, AL

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

NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to follow new BLRV of 3.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$

By Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH, FAAP, District Medical Officer, Northern/Northeastern Districts, Alabama Department of Public Health

In January 2022, the Alabama Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (ACLPPP) will begin following the updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended actions based on blood lead level (BLL), including the new blood lead reference value (BLRV) of 3.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. This will enable the ACLPPP to identify more children exposed to lead and facilitate earlier mitigation measures for the most highly exposed children so that they can be connected to appropriate medical, environmental, and developmental services.

In 2012, the CDC adopted a BLRV as a way of identifying the 2.5 percent of U.S. children ages 1–5 at greatest risk of lead exposure. The BLRV is based on the 97.5th percentile of the BLL distribution among children 1–5 years old in the U.S. from the two most recent cycles of data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Based on NHANES data from 2015–2018, CDC accepted the Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee (LEPAC) recommendation to update the BLRV from 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ to 3.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

Working with the CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, the ACLPPP is dedicated to reducing childhood lead poisoning as a public health problem through strengthening blood lead testing, reporting, and surveillance; linking exposed children to recommended services; and targeted population-based interventions. Blood lead testing should be included as part of the Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) at the 12- and 24-month check-up. All BLL results should be reported to the ACLPPP as a notifiable condition under the Administrative Code 420-4-1 of Alabama.

Exposure to lead can cause serious harm to a child's health. No safe BLL exists and even small amounts of lead in the blood can result in damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, and learning and behavioral problems. Lead exposure risks significantly decreased in the U.S. with the removal of lead in gasoline for on-road vehicles and lead-containing consumer paint; however, millions of children in the U.S. continue to be exposed to lead.

For more information on the ACLPPP, scan the QR code.



Coding

O New ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Code **R** for 2022 (Effective 10/01/21)

n Z71.85 Encounter for Immunization Safety
e Counseling

by Lynn Abernathy Brown, CPC

R Many providers are encountering parents and caregivers who want to discuss their concerns regarding the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine or who are hesitant about following the recommended vaccine schedule. A new code, Z71.85 Encounter for Immunization Safety Counseling, was introduced 10/1/2021. These

discussions may involve a lengthy conversation and go above the preventive care average visit time. The discussion may occur during any type of visit.

Consider the visit for a patient who may see the provider for a preventive care visit (99391-99395). During this visit, the parent has questions and concerns involving the COVID-19 vaccine safety and the discussion is an additional 10-15 minutes above the average Preventive visit 9939#. The provider could bill an additional E/M visit (Evaluation and Management) of 99212 with a 25 modifier (AL Medicaid 99212 with EP and 25) based on documented time.

The claim could be coded as follows:

9939# - Z00.129

99212 (required modifiers) – Z71.85

Code Z71.85 may be reported as the primary diagnosis or as a secondary diagnosis.

NEWS FROM THE AAP

AAP, AACAP, CHA declare national emergency in children's mental health

In mid-October, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the national Children's Hospital Association declared a national emergency in children's mental health, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of existing challenges.

They are urging policymakers to take action swiftly to address the crisis.

"Young people have endured so much throughout this pandemic and while much of the attention is often placed on its physical health consequences, we cannot overlook the escalating mental health crisis facing our patients," AAP President Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP, said in a statement. "[This] declaration is an urgent call to policymakers at all levels of government – we must treat this mental health crisis like the emergency it is."

Before the pandemic, rates of childhood mental health concerns and suicide had been rising steadily for at least a decade. By 2018, suicide was the second leading cause of death for youths ages 10 to 24 years.

The pandemic then brought on physical isolation, ongoing uncertainty, fear and grief. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers quantified that toll in several reports. They found between March and October 2020, emergency department visits for mental health emergencies rose by 24 percent for children ages 5 to 11 years and 31 percent for adolescents between the ages of 12 to 17 years. In addition, ED visits for suspected suicide attempts increased percent among girls ages 12 to 17 years in early 2021 compared to the same period in 2019.

Additionally, many young people have been impacted by loss of a loved one. Recent data show that more than 140,000 U.S. children have experienced the death of a primary or secondary caregiver during the COVID-19 pandemic, with children of color disproportionately impacted.

"We are caring for young people with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, their communities, and all of our futures," said AACAP President Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD.

continued on page 14

Souffrant family sees progress through ADRS programs



Huntsville's Souffrant family has experienced a wave of emotions as they have watched their son Lorenz grow. Lorenz, who was born five weeks premature and had his first surgery at 2 days old, has since endured 18 more surgeries and 100 hospital visits.

Lorenz has faced an uphill climb, but with the support of his parents Abena and Lawrence, his siblings, Early Intervention and medical professionals, he has made incredible progress.

Lorenz spent three months at University of Alabama at Birmingham where a genetics test revealed he also had Cat Eye Syndrome, which occurs when the 22nd chromosome has an additional chromosome attached. The syndrome tends to cause heart problems, small kidneys, and a segment of children with failure to thrive.

When Lorenz stabilized and was able to return home, Abena said Early Intervention programs proved to be extremely helpful.

"He was able to be in his comfort zone at home," she said. "He was able to see us, he was able to see his siblings. His everyday life was just better for him. They used whatever you had in your home to help the child progress; even using the siblings. I feel like they played a significant role in his growth and development."

The family incorporated everyday life into EI sessions, and the staff was always extremely patient and helpful.

Now Lorenz can play with his siblings with few reservations, and Lawrence said that brings him great joy.

"Seeing him now as strong as he is, as happy as he is, and as adventurous as he is puts a smile on my face," he said. "That really makes me happy."

For more information on these programs, visit <https://www.rehab.alabama.gov/> or call (334) 293-7500.

Submitting a resolution to the AAP Annual Leadership Forum/Conference

A quick and easy way for a grassroots pediatrician to make a big impact

Have you ever thought to yourself, “If I could change one thing in pediatrics, it would be _____.” Have you ever felt as if you had no voice, and no chance of changing the system?

Submitting a resolution to the American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) Annual Leadership Forum/Conference is simple and a great way for a busy pediatrician or pediatric subspecialist to make a significant impact. With a small time investment, a resolution can go a long way.

The purpose of resolutions is to provide a formal mechanism through which AAP members can give input concerning Academy policy and activities. All resolutions submitted to the ALF or to the AAP Board of Directors directly are considered by the Board, but are advisory and not binding.

Resolutions can be submitted pertaining to any aspect of pediatric advocacy, finance, practice, education, or AAP operations. Useful types of resolutions include:

- A request that the Academy develop a statement or otherwise take action on a particular issue.
- A request that the Academy inaugurate a new program or activity or reconsider a current AAP program or activity.
- A request that the AAP change its operating procedures.

The Chapter leadership encourages you to get involved in this meaningful way. A resolution is strongest and has the best chance of if it has the support and endorsement of the Chapter, District or an AAP Section or Committee. The Chapter Executive Board is more than willing to help you with the wording of a resolution; the Board will also consider as a body whether to formally endorse your resolution, although that is not a certainty. However, the Board’s policy instituted in 2010 is that it will ensure that your resolution has a fair hearing on the floor of the ALF regardless of endorsement.

The best way to assure successful passage

of your resolution at the AAP is to engage fellow AAP Section members, Chapter members or like-minded pediatricians who can help garner support of your issue.

For information on how to submit a resolution, visit <https://bit.ly/3ybRZ0u> (using your AAP log-in credentials) and there you will find a box/link to “Guidelines for Submitting Resolutions” (<https://bit.ly/3DEOd12>) as well as a link to a blank resolution template. The deadline for submitting resolutions to the AAP central office is April 1 of each year. In order for the Chapter leadership to consider endorsement of your resolution, please submit it to the Chapter office by the second Friday of March.

If the Chapter can be of assistance to you in this process, please email llee@alaap.org.

From the AAP, continued from page 13

“We cannot sit idly by. This is a national emergency, and the time for swift and deliberate action is now.”

In the declaration, the groups emphasize that young people in communities of color have been impacted by the pandemic more than others and how the ongoing struggle for racial justice is inextricably tied to the worsening mental health crisis.

The organizations are urging policymakers to take several actions:

- Increase federal funding to ensure all families can access mental health services;
- Improve access to telemedicine;
- Support effective models of school-based mental health care;
- Accelerate integration of mental health care in primary care pediatrics;
- Strengthen efforts to reduce the risk of suicide in children and adolescents;
- Address ongoing challenges of the acute care needs of children and adolescents;
- Fully fund community-based systems of care that connect

families to evidence-based interventions;

- Promote and pay for trauma-informed care services;
- Address workforce challenges and shortages so that children can access mental health services no matter where they live; and
- Advance policies that ensure compliance with mental health parity laws.

“We must identify strategies to meet these challenges through innovation and action,” the groups wrote, “using state, local and national approaches to improve the access to and quality of care across the continuum of mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment.”

The Alabama Chapter-AAP has addressed many of these issues in our recent conferences, and will be partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health over the next year on a number of fronts, including training of pediatricians on early intervention/trauma-informed care.

CHAPTER BRIEFS

Holloway appointed to HRSA's Advisory Commission on Childhood Vaccines



A.Z. Holloway, MD, FAAP

A.Z. Holloway, MD, FAAP, past president of the Alabama Chapter-AAP and a long-time pediatrician in Montgomery, has been selected and appointed as a member of the Advisory Commission on Childhood Vaccines (ACCV) of the Health Resources and Services Administration for a term of three years. The role of the ACCV is to advise and make recommendations to the Secretary of

Health and Human Services on issues relating to the operation of the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP). Congratulations, Dr. Holloway!

Gentle selected for AAP/VON Scholars Program



Samuel Gentle, MD, FAAP

AAP/VON Scholar Awards are awarded every year to five fellows and early career neonatologists by the Vermont Oxford Network (VON) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Neonatal Perinatal Medicine (SoNPM).

Sam Gentle, MD, FAAP assistant professor in the UAB Division of Neonatology, was selected as one of the five AAP/VON Scholars for 2021 in

recognition of his work in data-driven quality improvement in the care of infants.

"Attending the VON Annual Quality Congress ignited my QI journey," said Dr. Gentle. "Receiving recognition from the network transforming neonatal care reflects our care providers' commitment to continuously improve the outcomes of preterm infants."

Dr. Gentle's QI work focuses on systematic patient assessment and communication within the NICU with local initiatives involving oxygen saturation histogram analysis to reduce retinopathy of prematurity, oral feeding optimization to reduce length of stay in preterm infants, and standardizing ventilator weaning in extremely preterm infants.

Kudos, Dr. Gentle!

Whitley receives APS' highest honor



Richard Whitley, MD, FAAP

The American Pediatric Society (APS) has named Richard Whitley, MD, FAAP, professor in the UAB Division of Infectious Diseases, as the 2022 APS John Howland Award recipient, the highest honor bestowed by APS. The award recognizes Whitley for his significant contributions to advancing child health and the profession of pediatrics.

"Dr. Whitley's 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," said Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP, chair of the UAB Department of Pediatrics. "Beyond the importance of his work on antiviral therapy, he established the framework within which multi-institutional studies could be conducted in rare pediatric diseases other than cancer. Virtually all pediatricians and pediatric infectious diseases clinicians, and many physicians who practice any form of primary care, regularly use recommendations that resulted from his work. His sustained contributions to pediatrics have had a major impact for over 40 years, and his ongoing endeavors in drug discovery and exploration promise future benefits as well."

The APS John Howland Award was created in honor of clinician-scientist John Howland, MD. Since 1952, the annual award has recognized individuals for their distinguished service to pediatrics.

Congratulations, Dr. Whitley!

Reiff receives 2021 Earl J. Brewer Research Award



Dan Reiff, MD, FAAP

Dan Reiff, MD, FAAP, second-year fellow in the UAB Division of Pediatric Rheumatology, has received the 2021 Earl J. Brewer Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Rheumatology.

This award was established to recognize a fellow training in pediatric rheumatology who has distinguished himself/herself in an area of clinical

research. The honor was announced during the Pediatric Rheumatology: The Year in Review & Awards session during the American College of Rheumatology Convergence meeting in early November.

Congratulations, Dr. Reiff!

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