



The Alabama Pediatrician

Fourth Quarter 2022

From the President

Pediatricians around the state are rising to the challenges of our time



**Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP
Chapter President**

The 2022-2024 term of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Executive Board started on October 1, 2022, with the board members assuming their new roles. With that, this is my first opportunity to write to you as your Chapter

president. For those who do not yet know me, I am a community pediatrician in Enterprise, AL and one of the owners of the Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network. Like you, I am faced daily with the struggles of staffing shortages, rising costs, internet misinformation, and limited mental health resources all while in the midst of a very busy cold and flu season.

But there is hope!

Alabama pediatricians across the state are rising to meet these challenges. Since October, the Alabama Chapter has confirmed 15 new or returning chapter champions working with the AL-AAP board on issues like breastfeeding, immunization rates, oral health, physician payment, and mental health. An additional 27 pediatricians are serving on state or regional committees that impact child health, including five serving as Medical Directors for their regional Medicaid ACHN.

While all of these issues are important, the current mental health crisis is receiving extra focus from the Chapter. In order to help arm pediatricians with the resources that we need to meet this challenge, we have organized a mental health committee of expert pediatricians throughout the state to advise the board on educational and advocacy opportunities as well as

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Annual Meeting attendees enjoy practice management pearls, stellar pediatric education, special awards dinner

In September, more than 100 pediatricians and other healthcare providers from across the state gathered for the Chapter's Annual Meeting and Fall Pediatric Update at a new venue, the Renaissance Ross Bridge Resort in Birmingham. The meeting also was made available as a live virtual activity for those who couldn't get there in person. The conference featured a Friday practice management workshop, a Chapter business meeting on Saturday, and the annual awards dinner in association with Children's of Alabama.

When asked how knowledge is applied once he goes back home from the conference, one attendee noted, "We take back information learned at the conference and discuss with other staff team members such as nurse practitioners who didn't attend so that we are all up to date with the most recent evidence-based guidelines when caring for our patients."

Sessions included talks on mental health, oral health, endocrine issues, and asthma guidelines, among others.

At the conference, the Chapter leadership also hosted a small gathering for pediatric residents from across the state, which was well attended by residents from UAB and USA as well as faculty.

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



Chapter President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, presents the 2022 Legislative Hero award to Alabama Representative Paul Lee.

AL-AAP 2022 Legislative Hero, Alabama Representative Paul Lee

- In recognition of his leadership and tireless efforts in support of the health and safety of Alabama's children, specifically working with the Chapter to help educate fellow legislators on the importance of childhood immunizations;



Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, AL-AAP general/adolescent medicine pediatric at UAB Pediatrics, as the 2022 recipient of the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award, in recognition of her:

- Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion within and outside of her institution
- In-person and media advocacy on behalf of the pediatric community and all children for the right to prescribe evidence-based care, with one central theme: all

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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.

From the President continued from page 1

to meet with the Alabama Department of Mental Health regularly to foster cooperation.

Times are challenging but our members are bright and capable of meeting these challenges when we work together. If you are interested in serving in any capacity within the Chapter, please contact Linda Lee or myself. May you have a happy and healthy New Year!

Annual Meeting Recap continued from page 1

children in Alabama deserve access to the highest quality, evidence-based care, regardless of zip code, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation

- Service on state and local boards whose work positively impacts care for transgender youth and pregnant women and their infants
- Mentoring other pediatricians along their own advocacy journeys

Meagan Carpenter, MD, FAAP, AL-AAP, medical-pediatrician in Chatom, Ala., as the 2022 recipient of the Early Career Pediatrician Award, in recognition of her:

- Service as the team physician for the local Fruitdale High School football team, the medical director of a hospice facility, and the Chief of Staff of Washington County Hospital (which includes an 85-bed nursing home).
- Being the leading medical voice in the county in just three short years of practice, amid a raging pandemic.
- Service to the Chapter as a presenter at Career Day at USA and as part of the 2021 Child Death Review Project

Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP, Enterprise Pediatric Clinic

- In recognition of her above-and-beyond advocacy in promoting child health and supporting her fellow pediatricians

In addition, District X special achievement awards were presented to:

Candice Dye, MD, FAAP, General/Adolescent Medicine Pediatrician, UAB Pediatrics

- For consistent outreach to parents and the public on the importance of childhood vaccination and COVID-19 mitigation in schools.

Benjamin Estrada, MD, FAAP, Infectious Disease Specialist, USA Pediatrics

- For going above and beyond in 2021 to provide up-to-the-minute infectious disease expertise to the Chapter as we have



Chapter Incoming President Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP presents the 2022 Early Career Pediatrician Award to Meagan Carpenter, MD, FAAP, (right).



Incoming President Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP, accepts the presidential gavel from Outgoing President Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP, during her installation at the awards dinner.



In attendance at the dinner were Master Pediatricians Paula Drummond, MD, FAAP, Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, Eric Tyler, MD, FAAP, Derrol Dawkins, MD, FAAP, Jacqueline Stewart, MD, FAAP, Michael Ramsey, MD, FAAP, and Cathy Wood, MD, FAAP.

Annual Meeting Recap continued from page 2

navigated the pandemic and made efforts to mitigate its effects on children.

Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP, Chapter Board Member and pediatrician, Mobile Pediatric Clinic

- For moving the needle for the Chapter on its diversity and inclusion efforts by instituting a D&I committee and developing impactful education for members.

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



Wallace Clyde winners, past and present, gather at the awards dinner: A.Z. Holloway, MD, FAAP, Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, Karen Landers, MD, FAAP, Jamie Odrezin, MD, FAAP, and Eric Tyler, MD, FAAP.

Stewart named Master Pediatrician, Odrezin 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 Jacqueline Stewart, MD, FAAP, of Magnolia Pediatrics in Birmingham has joined her colleagues on the list.

Dr. Stewart attained her medical degree at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and completed her residency at Lloyd Noland Hospital in Fairfield, Ala. She started practicing at Magnolia Pediatrics in 1979 and has been there ever since. Along with her practice, she keeps busy with her daycare for sick children, Huggs and Kisses Sick Child Care. In addition to her professional memberships, she is president of the National Association for Sick Child Day Care and serves on the Child Care Resources Board of Directors. She has been honored with the Citizenship Award, NAACP Women of Distinction Award, Outstanding Service Award and more.

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, Jamie Odrezin, MD, FAAP, a retired pediatrician from Greenvale Pediatrics, was honored with the award for developing relationships and connections with thousands of patients over the span of her 39-year practice. Her greatest passion was caring for hundreds of children with Type 1 diabetes; this part of her practice took off in the 1980s, when there was only one pediatric endocrinologist at Children's. She dedicated her career to become a child's biggest advocate while both helping and encouraging families to understand the importance of treating their whole child, not just the disease.

Well-deserved, Drs. Stewart and Odrezin!



The year's Master Pediatrician recipient, Jacqueline Stewart, MD, FAAP, accepts the Master Pediatrician jacket of distinction from previous Master Pediatrician recipient Derrol Dawkins, MD, FAAP.



Jamie Odrezin, MD, FAAP, accepts the Wallace Clyde Award from Sandy Thurmond, Vice President of Primary Care Services at Children's of Alabama.

How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

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Teen Mental Wellness QI Collaborative kicks off in December

The Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) is excited to kick off our new learning collaborative this fall. SEEN: A Teen Mental Wellness QI Collaborative will focus on the teen mental health crisis that our state is facing; recent studies have shown that up to 20% of teens have a mental health disorder, and suicide rates are rising. Pediatricians are uniquely suited to support families in the medical home. The AAP Bright Futures Guidelines recommend universal screening for depression and suicide, while the AAP Policy Statement, *Mental Health Competencies for Pediatric Practice*, sets expectations that practitioners develop the skills to address the screen results.

The SEEN collaborative will help practices establish sustainable clinical processes to universally screen 12-to 18-year-olds for depression, document a follow-up plan and follow-up positive screens within 30 days. Participating practices will have the opportunity to test and implement change ideas by applying quality improvement (QI) tools such as plan-do-study-act cycles and ramps. During monthly SEEN webinars, practices will follow an “all teach, all learn” approach to rapidly overcome barriers and spread best ideas for screening and follow-up among one another other.

To further enhance practitioner mental competencies, practice members will join PATHS' ECHO sessions to work closely with mental health experts and peers across the state. PATHS (Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services) is a statewide program dedicated to increasing capacity for primary care providers in Alabama's rural communities to diagnose, treat, and manage mild to moderate behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/3Vrfyld>.

While registration for the SEEN collaborative is closed, the ACHIA website (www.ACHIA.org) has a compendium of mental health resources. There you can find key mental health articles, practice tools and resources, as well as QI tools to improve clinic mental health processes. Learnings from these practices will also be spread to all Chapter members post-collaborative.



Mental Health Competencies for Pediatric Practice

- Use foundational communication skills (Common Elements, Common Factors)
- Incorporate mental health content and tools into health promotion
- Provide psychosocial assessments
- Have knowledge and skills of evidence-based psychosocial therapy and psychopharmacologic therapy
- Skills to function as team member and comanager with mental health specialists
- Commitment to embrace mental health practice as integral to pediatric care

Foy JM, Green CM, Earls MF, AAP COMMITTEE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP WORK GROUP. Mental Health Competencies for Pediatric Practice. Pediatrics. 2019;144(5):e20192757

Chapter re-establishes mental health committee, leadership meets with ADMH Commissioner

In September, the Chapter conducted a survey among its members about mental health needs of children in their practice. From the responses of 88 pediatricians across the state, it was overwhelmingly clear that pediatricians need more support in everything from education to reliable places to refer in order to get feedback and care coordination for their patients.

In early October, a small group of pediatricians vested in addressing children's mental health needs, including Chapter President Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP, met with the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, and explored ways for the Chapter and ADMH to effectively move forward in order to support children served in pediatric practices.

From that discussion, four follow-up steps emerged and that work has already begun:

- The Chapter has re-established a mental health committee comprised of both specialists and primary care pediatricians, which is being organized by Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, Area 2 Representative to the Executive Board, who will serve as a liaison to the Board.
- That committee is in the process of establishing regular meetings with the commissioner and her staff.
- The first order follow-up item with the commissioner is about increasing communication between community mental health centers and primary care providers.
- We will also be working with her on programs that align with our goals and those of the Department.
- We are also working to include ADMH Commissioner at one of our conferences in 2023 regarding resources throughout the state and how pediatricians can access them.

The biggest hurdle that we will hope to address is how to defragment care. Our work is cut out for us.

Chapter secures second grant from AAP; this time focused on building resilience in children and families

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

As another step in the Chapter's goals to systematically address adverse childhood experiences, the Chapter applied for and was awarded another AAP grant to carry out a short project to help pediatricians develop partnerships with their local home-visiting and parent resource providers to strengthen families and communities as extensions of the pediatric medical home.

Led by the Chapter in coordination with the Alabama Department of Child Abuse Neglect & Prevent/the Alabama Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America/Children's Trust Fund (PCA), the four-month initiative will help link Chapter members in four local areas of the state with local resource/service providers in order to work together to build resilience, thereby helping to prevent child abuse.

The AL-AAP and PCA, as well as other partners on the project's statewide leadership team, selected four geographically disparate regions of the state to conduct four breakfast roundtables in December and January: Dothan, Tuscaloosa, Huntsville and Lee County.

The initiative will prioritize the following outcomes based on the identified needs of the communities:

- Meeting the basic needs of children and families. Children need a solid foundation of nutritious food, stable, affordable housing and safe neighborhoods and their families need financial stability.
- Ensuring every child has access to the physical, emotional and mental health care they need — when and where they need it; by providing access to pediatricians, mental health and other healthcare providers.
- Connecting families to evidence-based home visiting programs such as Healthy Families America will help to provide support, access to resources, knowledge of parenting and strategies to reducing stress.

At each forum, pediatricians and their home visiting and parenting resource provider counterparts will focus on the outcomes listed above, with a global aim of addressing how to build resilient communities. Table work will include sharing resources and engaging in community mapping to help pediatrician attendees locate resources for patients and families that will ultimately prevent child abuse and foster resilience. These regional maps will be used to create a statewide map that can be shared with all attendees, other identified partners and the entire AL-AAP membership.

Pediatricians in the four areas are receiving invitations now to attend these breakfast sessions. If you are in these areas, look for emailed details in your inbox!

Coding

0 2023 Coding Tools

by Lynn Abernathy Brown, CPC

The newest addition of Coding for Pediatrics 2023, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, arrived today and I found it helpful to review, especially because it touched on so many areas of pediatric coding. It is just one of the tools I use to stay up to date on the coding changes.

If your group provides hospital services, there are CPT coding changes for 2023 that you will want to be aware of, especially related to observation services. Several CPT codes have either been deleted or their descriptions changed, and it may be helpful to review these updates.

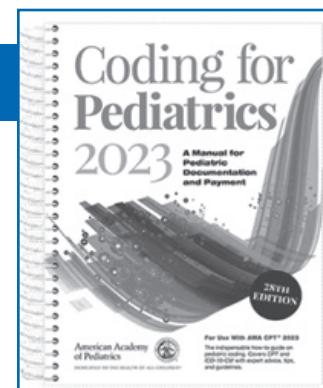
The appendix in this book offers quick references for diagnosis updates, CPT changes and common routine and COVID vaccine codes. Online tools are also available for diagnosis codes at ICD10Data.com at no cost (<https://bit.ly/3B2D8Z6>)

One diagnosis code that was added is Z71.85 – Encounter for pediatric-to-adult transition counseling. This can be a primary or secondary code and can be used along with any other diagnoses addressed during the visit.

Coding for Pediatrics 2023 can be found here: <https://shop.aap.org/coding-for-pediatrics-2023-28th-edition-paperback/>

I have no financial interest in the purchase of this product, or any webinar offered for coding updates but keeping you and your staff up to date on coding changes every year, using the best pediatric related resources available, is always encouraged.

DISCLAIMER: Children's of Alabama does not accept responsibility or liability for any adverse outcome from the advice of Lynn A. Brown, CPC, for any reason, including inaccuracy, opinion and analysis that might prove erroneous, or the misunderstanding or misapplication of extremely complex topics. Any statement made by Lynn A. Brown, CPC, does not imply payment guarantee by any payor discussed.



Reach Out and Read All About It!

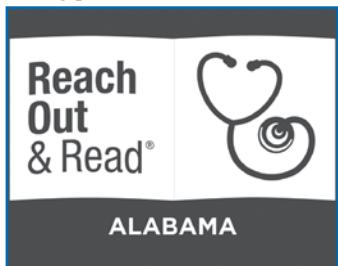
Reach Out and Read-Alabama is “Making Moments That Matter” with end-of-year campaign

As a pediatric healthcare provider, you know that parents and caregivers want the best for their children -- to provide them with a safe, loving environment and opportunities that will help them flourish. But, as you also know, being parents or caregivers to young children can be overwhelming, and it's not always easy to know how best to support their growth.

Reach Out and Read-Alabama has provided a simple, attainable, and effective solution for the last 16 years. Simply spending time with a child reading together for 15 minutes every day will deliver tangible and lasting benefits. Parents and children alike can look forward to cuddling up together with a book each day. What's more, they can be confident that it's time

well spent, helping forge closer bonds and build the empathy and resilience that children will rely on throughout their lives.

Your continued support of the program is making even more of these moments for Alabama's children, and with your donation to our end-of-year campaign, we can reach even more families this year than ever before.



Reach Out and Read-Alabama represented at national meeting

At the end of October, Reach Out and Read-Alabama Medical Director Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, and Statewide Coordinator Amy Crosby traveled to Madison, WI for the 2022 Reach Out and Read Leadership Conference.

The conference provided them with many learning experiences, including a tour of the Interstate Books4School Warehouse, impactful breakout sessions, enlightening keynote presentations, and several fascinating plenaries. Not only were they able to network with colleagues

from ROR affiliates across the country and the National

Center staff, but they also met many of the book vendors from which ROR-Alabama program sites purchase the books they provide to their families.

“Two of the main takeaways from the conference are the renewed focus on promoting Early Relational Health and incorporating the parent voice in all that we do,” said Crosby. “Although it was a very busy few days, we gleaned many ideas that we are working to implement in Alabama. We look forward to sharing what we learned in Madison with our Reach Out and Read-Alabama network over the next few months!”

Reach Out and Read is On the Air!
Engaging conversations with experts in childhood health and literacy

Are you into listening to insightful, pediatric-focused podcasts? Join Reach Out and Read National as it hosts Dipesh Navsaria, MD, FAAP, a Wisconsin-based pediatrician with a children's librarianship degree. Segment by segment, Dr. Navsaria dives into a broad range of early childhood health and literacy topics with expert guests who examine the many facets of supporting the parent-child relationship as key to early success.



Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, ROR-Alabama Medical Director, tours book warehouse at the Leadership Conference



Making Moments that Matter

At Reach Out and Read, we know that reading aloud together, telling stories, and sharing books help forge a lasting, meaningful connection between caregiver and child--they create *Moments that Matter.*

This time is not just special and joyous, it's life-changing!

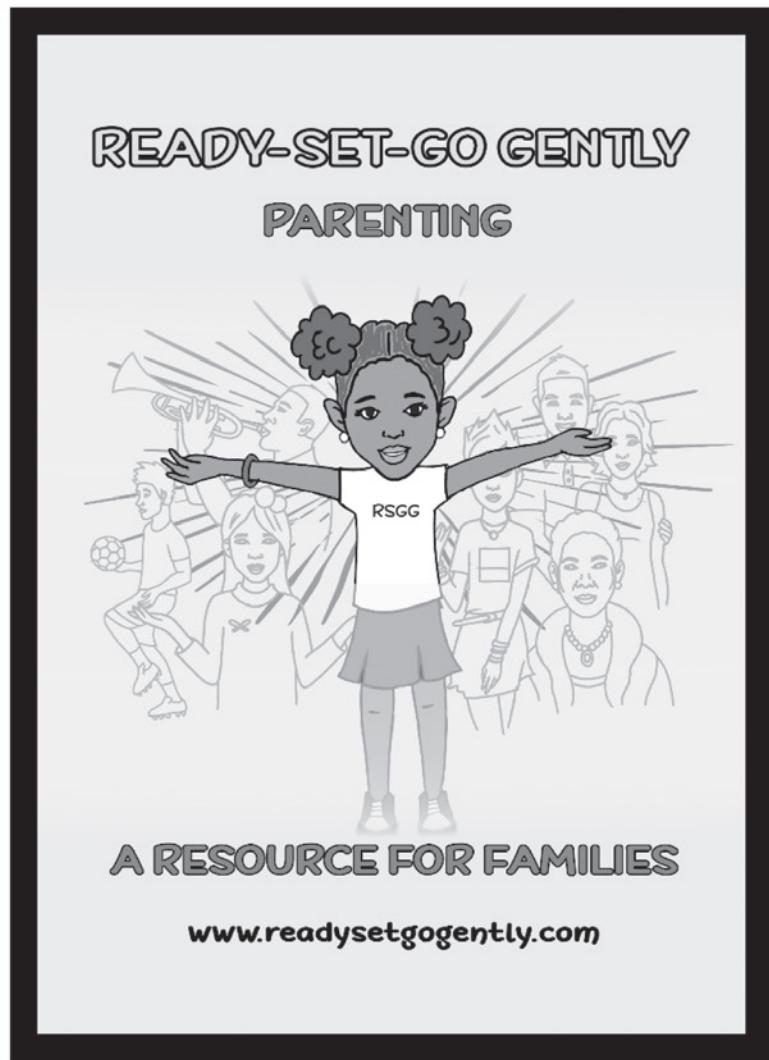
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LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

CMC program at Children's of Alabama

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

Children with Medical Complexity (CMC) are at high risk for healthcare utilization and hospitalizations. Nationally, children's hospitals have implemented a variety of care delivery models for CMC, all aimed at reducing hospitalizations and improving outcomes. At the core of these models lies access to care

and strong care coordination. Here at Children's, we are excited to begin development of a Comprehensive Complex Care Program to provide high-quality continuous, coordinated, and family-centered care for children with chronic and complex conditions.

We are thrilled to have Marie A. Pfarr, MD, MSc, FAAP, join the faculty here at UAB as an assistant professor in pediatric hospital medicine. She will lead the development of this important program. Originally

from Texas, she completed a medicine-pediatric residency at the University of Michigan, followed by a pediatric hospital medicine fellowship at Cincinnati Children's, where she also attained a master's degree in clinical research. She has always had a passion for caring for CMC and her training has helped her garner the necessary clinical, research, and leadership experience to continue to focus on this important patient population.

The new program will span both inpatient and outpatient sectors. As a first step, an inpatient complex care service will be dedicated to caring for these children while they are admitted to the hospital. A multidisciplinary team will allow for improved provider continuity and enhanced care coordination. Next, we will develop an ambulatory co-management / consult service with telemedicine capabilities for CMC who are our patients throughout the state. With this program, we hope to create lasting relationships with community medical homes and provide support and resources as needed. Finally, we plan to develop an outpatient medical home dedicated to caring for local CMC. Telemedicine will be leveraged, promising to reduce logistical burdens and improve access to care.



**Marie A. Pfarr, MD,
MSc, FAAP**

While in the early stages of development, we are collaborating and learning from various stakeholders. Most importantly, we are working with patients and their families. Building a patient- and family-centered program is integral to our mission. We also cannot underestimate the importance of building partnerships with Children's of Alabama subspecialties, community physicians, and local and state organizations.

USA Pediatrics: Pulmonary Hypertension Clinic meets growing demand

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



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

Advances in neonatology, including surfactant and antenatal corticosteroids, have increased survival rates of extremely low birth weight infants (500 – 800 grams) from 20 percent in 1980 to 91 percent today in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at USA Health Children's and Women's Hospital.

As a consequence, the risk of developing pulmonary hypertension is greater for premature infants born in the 21st century compared to those born in the 1980s. Premature infants born at gestational ages with increased risk for the development of pulmonary hypertension were less likely to survive decades ago. Pulmonary function is reduced in extremely low birth weight premature infants, leading to airflow limitation, impaired exercise capacity and right ventricular systolic function in children and young adults who survive preterm birth.

To address the healthcare needs of NICU graduates with pulmonary hypertension, the USA Health Department of Pediatrics has created a Pediatric Pulmonary Hypertension Clinic. Athira Nair, MD, FAAP, Division of Pediatric Cardiology and Eliana Eakin, MD, FAAP, Division of Pediatric Pulmonology, have teamed to lead this effort, which provides comprehensive care to these children.

Early referral and intervention are important in these patients. Since available treatments are less effective in later stages of this condition, the new clinic is one example where offering focused subspecialty care helps achieve a goal of healthier outcomes for children.



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®



NEWS FROM MEDICAID

Providers can stay up to date with the Alabama Medicaid Agency (Medicaid) through Provider ALERTs. These are published on the Agency website at www.Medicaid.Alabama.gov under the “Newsroom” tab. To receive ALERTs by email, contact the Gainwell Technologies Provider Assistance Center at 1-800-688-7989.

ACHN Update

The Alabama Coordinated Health Network (ACHN) program returned to normal operations on October 1. The ACHNs now have a “hybrid” model of care coordination delivery (including face-to-face and telephonic visits with Medicaid recipients). Providers are highly encouraged to accommodate ACHN care coordinators within your offices and other facilities.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is a nationally recognized, evidence-based program that provides prenatal, postpartum, and infant home-visiting services until the child reaches age two. Goals of the NFP program are to improve health outcomes for mother and child, decrease total Medicaid expenditures among families who receive NFP services, increase healthy spacing between births to 24 months, and reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Eligibility criteria for these services include Medicaid-eligible women who are first-time mothers and/or have a high-risk pregnancy. High-risk pregnancy includes consideration of the mother’s age (less than 17 or older than 35), previous negative pregnancy outcomes, and those with existing medical conditions prior to becoming pregnant (e.g., high blood pressure, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases).

NFP services are available (as of October 4, 2022) in the following counties:

Provider: AlaHealth (Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Limestone, Morgan, Madison)

Provider: NFP of Central Alabama at University of Alabama at Birmingham (Marion, Lamar, Fayette, Winston, Walker, Jefferson, Shelby, Bibb)

Provider: Easterseals West Alabama (Tuscaloosa)

Provider: Gift of Life (Autauga, Montgomery, Macon, Russell)

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3UobUmy>.

Rate increase for Evaluation and Management (E&M) procedure codes

Alabama Medicaid increased the reimbursement rates for Evaluation and Management (E&M) procedure codes effective October 1, 2022. Rural providers will continue to receive \$1.00 more per procedure code for the new reimbursement rates. Additionally, these increases do not impact the ACHN Participating Physician enhanced rates for selected E&M codes or Physician Bump rates. For questions related to the E&M procedure code reimbursement rates, contact Gainwell Technologies Provider Assistance Center at 1-800-688-7989. The procedure codes are listed in the ALERT dated September 16, 2022: <https://bit.ly/3UqvSNB>.

Physician office visit limit change for recipients with active cancer treatment

Alabama Medicaid will increase the annual physician office visit maximum to 32 for Medicaid recipients receiving cancer treatment during the calendar year (January - December) effective January 1, 2023. This increase will be available for each calendar year in which the recipient is receiving cancer treatment and is applicable for all cancers. Providers with billing questions should contact the Gainwell Technologies Provider Assistance Center at 1-800-688-7989. To be reimbursed for services, providers must comply with requirements detailed in the Provider ALERT from October 18, 2022: <https://bit.ly/3VqM8zj>.

Proposed postpartum coverage extension to 12 months

Alabama Medicaid submitted a proposal to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) in July 2022 to extend postpartum coverage under the Maternity Program from 60 days to 12 months. The Agency is still awaiting CMS approval.

Medicaid covers over half of the births in the state. To help improve maternal health, the Agency plans to extend postpartum coverage and evaluate the usage of benefits and maternal health outcomes (e.g., screening for clinical depression, decreasing the prevalence of hypertension and diabetes during pregnancy, and increasing the rate of contraceptive care). During the COVID-19 public health emergency, all states must provide continuous coverage to Medicaid recipients to be eligible for enhanced federal matching funds under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. As a result, postpartum coverage has been continuous since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Dental coverage added for pregnant adult recipients

Alabama Medicaid will reimburse for dental services rendered to pregnant adults who are ages 21 and older during pregnancy, and for 60 days postpartum when the services are rendered by Medicaid-enrolled dental providers. Services have not changed for individuals under age 21.

To be reimbursed for services, dental providers must comply with requirements detailed in the Provider ALERT from September 21, 2022: <https://bit.ly/3OSInAg>.

PROTECT BOYS AND GIRLS FROM Human Papilloma Virus



Only healthcare professionals have the power to reduce the risk of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) cancers and pre-cancers among your patients. It is your goal for every patient you care for to complete vaccine series against HPV before the age of 13. You can give initial dose as early as 9 years of age.

TIPS TO INCREASE VACCINATION RATES

- Your strong recommendation is proven to be the strongest indicator of vaccination.
- Send out recall/reminder messages via mail, email, or text to increase office visits.
- Schedule the next appointment before they leave the current visit.
- Recommend all ACIP vaccines.
- Assess each patient's vaccine status using ImmPRINT Forecaster.
- Educate all staff about your immunization goals for your patients.

70%
of oropharyngeal cancers can be prevented.

80%
of sexually active people will contract HPV over their lifetime.

90%
of cancers caused by HPV could be prevented.



For more information, please visit
alabamapublichealth.gov/imm



Peanut Allergy Prevention Through Early Introduction

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

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

More resources for you and families available at www.PreventPeanutAllergies.org

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Early Career Spotlight: Dr. Lauren Gibson cherishes role of pediatrician in patient lives

By Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 2 Representative

This month's early career spotlight is on Dr. Lauren Gibson, a general pediatrician practicing in Gadsden. Upon graduating from the University of Alabama School of Medicine, she moved to Columbia, SC, where she completed her pediatric residency at Palmetto Health / University of South Carolina School of Medicine in 2019. She then moved back to Alabama, where she joined Gadsden Pediatric Clinic and was able to succeed her own childhood pediatrician who had recently retired. She is a partner in the practice and serves as the site coordinator for Reach Out and Read-Alabama. She also rounds at Gadsden Regional Medical Center, where she sees newborns in the nursery and patients from clinic admitted for inpatient care.



Lauren Gibson, MD, FAAP

Dr. Gibson's interest in pediatrics began at a young age as she admired her own pediatrician while also being fascinated by advocacy and relationship opportunities. "Though other specialties can advocate for their patients, few, I feel, can claim to have a more vulnerable patient population." She was able to see firsthand some of the struggles that children face while volunteering at a homeless shelter for women and children, where children spoke of traumatic events "as though they were a normal part of daily lives."

From the mother crying over her sick infant to the teen afraid of admitting depression due to fear of family rejection, she sees herself as their advocate. Dr. Gibson served on an advocacy committee during residency and participated in several Legislative Days as a medical student in Montgomery, Ala., and as a resident in Columbia, SC.

In her free time, Dr. Gibson's interests include interior design, biking, hiking, working out, and spending time with family and friends.

The staff of Gadsden Pediatric Clinic says that "Dr. Gibson is not only a noted, well-respected physician in Gadsden, she also serves our staff, community, and patients exceptionally well. She is hard-working, enthusiastic, and is ever so conscious about her duties as a pediatrician. She takes the time to provide excellent care and compassion to our patients while possessing superb clinical skills. Gadsden Pediatric Clinic is extremely fortunate to have Dr. Gibson serving with our team of professionals."

We are thankful for the advocate that Dr. Gibson has become and are excited about what the future holds for her.

Discovery happens here.

When physicians, scientists and researchers with extraordinary talent and passion are given the technology, the facilities, and the support, they achieve great things. The discoveries, innovations and clinical trials happening today will help shape the future of treatments and lead to cures. And it benefits not only the patients and families who come to Children's of Alabama, but people across the country and around the world for years to come.

To learn about the more than 90 current clinical trials for childhood cancer and blood disorders, visit ChildrensAL.org/cancer-clinical-trials.



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CHAPTER BRIEFS

Martin presented with Local Hero Award at AAP NCE



Angela Martin, MD, FAAP

Congratulations to Angela Martin, MD, FAAP, of Anniston, who was one of two winners of the 2022 AAP Local Hero Award from the AAP Council on Community Pediatrics. The awards were presented at the AAP National Conference & Exhibition in October.

The Local Hero Award recognizes pediatricians who lead community action and advocacy for children in local communities. This award is presented to individuals who epitomize the “community pediatrician.”

Dr. Martin, a community pediatrician at the Pediatric Care Center, successfully advocated for universal 24-7 on-call medical care access for children from a rural region spanning eight counties.

Kimberlin receives PIDS's highest award

David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, was named the recipient of the 2022

Walter T. Hughes Distinguished Physician Award.

This award is given by the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS) to a pediatrician who has made significant contributions to the field of pediatric infectious diseases. The award is the society's highest recognition.

Kudos, Dr. Kimberlin, on this well-deserved honor!



David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP

Nichols named to BBJ Top 40 Under 40

Alana Nichols, MD, PGY-2 Med-Peds resident at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, was named to the *Birmingham Business Journal's* Top 40 Under 40.

The *Journal* celebrated its class of 40 Under 40 on August 18 at Iron City. This list honors the rising stars in the Birmingham area who are making an impact on the business community in the city.

Congratulations to Dr. Nichols!

Chapter meets with DHR regarding Medicaid enrollment of foster children

In October, several pediatric practices in Alabama expressed concern regarding delays (sometimes lengthy) in Alabama's foster children becoming enrolled in Medicaid, which is the responsibility of the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR). A number of pediatric practices indicated lag times that perpetuated lingering non-payment to the pediatric practices due to lack of communication from the DHR county office or case worker.

In early November, the Chapter met with the leadership at DHR to express these concerns and come up with solutions to the problem. While there has been unprecedented turnover among case workers in the last year, much like many industries, there are also court orders that sometimes cause these lag times in prompt enrollment of foster children in Medicaid. Regardless, all agreed that communication is key and the following points were made:

- 1) Important: Pediatric offices, if they are not getting a timely resolution with the case workers on this issue, should contact the county DHR office director by using the contact list found here: <https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact/>. If the issue is still not resolved in a timely fashion, the deputy commissioner encouraged pediatricians to contact the state office via Amanda Mancuso, Director, Children and Family Services, at amanda.mancuso@dhr.alabama.gov or 334-242-9504, or Karen Smith, Deputy Commissioner, Children and Family Services, at karen.smith@dhr.alabama.gov or 334-242-9329.
- 2) Meanwhile, those contacts to Amanda and Karen will be addressed to identify universal or continued problem areas to seek solutions and come up with potential fixes. They will be looking at patterns and whether these issues are more prevalent in certain areas of the state or with certain populations of children (they are already looking into the counties that we identified).
- 3) It is important to note that once Medicaid coverage is instituted, it is retroactive to the date of home removal, when DHR took custody of the child.
- 4) Relatedly, it is important to state that foster children should be seen for a primary care visit within 10 days of placement, regardless of payment; DHR and Medicaid commit to backdating payments, and the County DHR office director should be contacted regarding direct billing, if needed. Primary care pediatricians are encouraged to refer these children for specialty care as normal; retroactive payments apply for all care.

The Chapter will be following up with DHR in the future to see what they learn from these communications from pediatric practices.

NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

Update on monkeypox

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

Currently, there have been 167 confirmed cases of monkeypox in Alabama. Although there has not been a confirmed case in a patient less than 18 years of age, the possibility exists of both high-risk exposures and cases.

As a reminder, the JYNNEOS vaccine is available for use as post-exposure prophylaxis for children and adolescents as young as 5 months of age determined to be at high risk for monkeypox infection under the Emergency Use Authorization issued by the Food & Drug Administration.

JYNNEOS in those less than 18 years of age is delivered via subcutaneous injection as two doses (0.5mL each) given four weeks apart, ideally with the first dose given within four days of exposure.

As children less than 8 years of age are at high risk of severe disease if infected with monkeypox, this group can be considered for treatment with oral tecovirimat (TPOXX). Pediatric patients weighing at least 13 kg can take capsules or the contents of a TPOXX capsule mixed with soft food provided they are able to eat a fatty meal to ensure optimal drug absorption. Monitoring of renal function is recommended in pediatric patients < 2 years of age.

Please visit <https://bit.ly/3VzjbB0> for more information on prevention and treatment of monkeypox in pediatric patients and <https://bit.ly/3XSg1KF> for up-to-date information on the status in Alabama.

ALL Kids celebrates 25 years!

In October, the Children's Health Insurance (CHIP) Program celebrated 25 years of serving Alabama children and teens with high quality, low-cost healthcare coverage for families with incomes above Medicaid eligibility and up to 300 percent of federal poverty level.

Chapter members Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, and Bob Beshear, MD, FAAP, of Montgomery were on the original CHIP Commission, established by the Alabama Legislature in 1997 to develop the program and plan for its funding in Alabama. After months of planning, Alabama became the first state in the nation to have a federally approved CHIP plan.

"For the past 25 years, ALL Kids has opened new doors to quality health care for more than 1.6 million children in our state by offering an excellent comprehensive health coverage plan," said Governor Kay Ivey. "I am designating October 14 as Children's Health Insurance Program Day."

From the start, the goal of the ALL Kids program has been to improve the health of Alabama's children by reducing the number of children without health insurance coverage.

"This significant milestone could not have been reached without the cooperation of our partners and our CHIP team through the years," said State Health Officer Scott Harris, MD. "Before the program's initiation, 15 percent of Alabama's children were uninsured, and now Alabama ranks better in insuring children than the United States as a whole. We continue to strive to improve the health outcomes and lives of this vulnerable population."



Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, attends ALL Kids' 25th anniversary commemoration along with Gayle Sandlin, the program's original director.



Bob Beshear, MD, FAAP, and Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, both instrumental in ALL Kids' beginnings, attend the program's kick-off in 1997, along with then-Lieutenant Governor Don Siegelman.

Event Calendar

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

AL-AAP's PMA regrouping for new membership year

By Tonya Pitts, Chair, Practice Management Association, and Billing Coordinator, Fairhope Pediatrics

We are excited about this upcoming year! The Alabama Chapter-AAP's Practice Management Association (PMA) is working hard to schedule webinars, workshops, regional breakouts, as well as more in-person collaboration at our annual workshop. We also have the practice management listserv, which remains a great resource for all of our members.

Our goal is to make the PMA more appealing for both online and face-to-face interaction. When we can build these relationships, we expand our knowledge and team statewide. We encourage every provider or practice to enroll at least one of your leadership team to the PMA (go here to sign up: <https://www.alaap.org/practice-management-association-who-we-are>).

If there are topics you would like the PMA to cover, please reach out to me at tpitts@fairhopeped.com.

Alabama Chapter

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