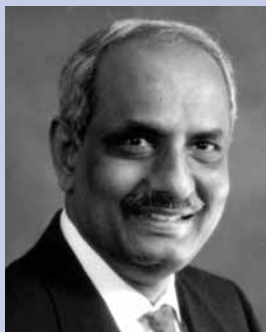




The Alabama Pediatrician

Spring 2007

From the Chapter President



V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP
Chapter President

Dear Colleagues,

This year has gotten off to a great start as we have had our hand in many important initiatives impacting child health in Alabama.

In January, 86 pediatricians and other stakeholders came together for our Mental Health Open Forum. The

meeting was a success, with recommendations being developed for a white paper that will soon be distributed to lawmakers and other leaders.

In February, three of our officers and our Executive Director traveled to Washington, DC, for the Medical Association's government affairs meeting. I had the opportunity to sit down with Senator Jeff Sessions and convey our support for additional funding for this year's SCHIP reauthorization. Many thanks go to all of the Chapter members who contacted the governor in late February to protect the healthcare coverage of so many children.

We must remain vigilant on this and other funding concerns for both Medicaid and SCHIP. Meanwhile, we are monitoring other state legislation impacting child health. We hope that as many Chapter members as possible will join us on April 5 at the Alabama State House for our Pediatric Legislative Day to explore all of these issues.

Of course, I also hope to see all of you in Sandestin for our spring meeting!

Finally, I am delighted to report that a Senior Committee is being formed under the leadership of Don Palmer, MD, FAAP, to look at how this segment of our membership can work together. And, our Chapter has been honored as a nominee for Outstanding Chapter by the AAP! Each and every one of you should be congratulated on this important achievement.

Alabama Chapter-AAP

2007 SPRING MEETING & PEDIATRIC UPDATE

April 26-29, 2007 • Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort

Spring Meeting hotel reservation deadline April 5!

Early bird meeting registration is April 13

April 5 is the hotel reservation deadline and April 13 is the early bird meeting registration deadline for the 2007 Spring Meeting and Pediatric Update, set for April 26-29 at the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort (bayside)!

Held for the first time on the bay side of the Sandestin resort at the Linkside Conference Center, the meeting will feature 13.5 hours of Category I CME from both national and state faculty on such topics as cardiology, gastroenterology, pediatric gynecology, orthopedic medicine and breastfeeding support (see speaker/topic line-up on pages 5 and 6).

This year, the social events will include a Meet & Greet opening reception in the exhibit hall, a Dinner and Dessert by the Bay, and the second annual "It's Tiki Time" Young Pediatricians Get-Together sponsored by the Young Pediatricians Committee, which will be held at Graffiti in the Baytowne Wharf area immediately following the Saturday dinner. The entire evening on Saturday will feature live music, like last year. Fun group child care activities are also being planned by the hotel recreation staff and sitters, so don't forget to sign your children up for the child care program!



"I would like to remind Chapter members to please be aware that the accommodations for this year's meeting include both bayside and beachside accommodations, but that the Sandestin Hilton is NOT part of our room block," said Linda Lee, APR, Chapter Executive Director. "The Chapter web site has links to all of the information you need to make your accommodations selection."

For more information, call 334-954-2543 or visit the Chapter web site at www.alchapaap.org.

Register now for Fourth Annual Legislative Day

For the fourth consecutive year, Alabama Chapter-AAP members will convene at the Alabama State House for Pediatric Legislative Day, set this year for the morning of Thursday, April 5.

Sponsored by Children's Hospital of Alabama, the event offers 1.25 hours of Category I CME and will feature morning group meetings with legislators, including Speaker of the House Seth Hammett and newly elected Senator Parker Griffith, MD, a physician from Huntsville, who will enlighten the group about how to talk with their legislators.

Attendees will also hear from Linda Tilly, Executive Director of VOICES for

continued on page 2

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Alabama Chapter – AAP Mission, Values and Vision Statement

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 ever stronger.

Vision:

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

2007 Legislative Update

The 2007 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature began March 6, 2007, with numerous interest groups and legislators introducing bills and Governor Bob Riley calling for tax cuts for families, 7 percent teacher pay raises and an \$850 million school-building program.

Action in the legislature is expected to move slowly, particularly in the Alabama Senate, due to changes in the rules which lowered the vote from 21 to 18 to cut off debate on budgets and redistricting, which some say will gridlock the senate for some time.

The Alabama Chapter-AAP is already monitoring and responding to numerous bills affecting child health, as well as looking at factors on both the national and state fronts that will affect the state's Medicaid and SCHIP budgets.

Here is a synopsis:

Funding for the State General Fund Budget

- **Medicaid:** The Alabama Medicaid Agency's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request has been submitted and approved by the Governor for \$71.5 million. Due to savings from excess Katrina funds and Upper Payment Limit settlements from 2004 and 2005, the agency does not expect to have a budget shortfall and anticipates full support for its request from the Alabama Legislature. This budget funds Medicaid at its current levels, with no increase in services or eligibility. At the Agency's recent Medical Care Advisory Committee meeting, Immediate Past President Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, made a motion for the Commissioner's staff to determine how much it would cost the Agency to increase eligibility for all age groups to 100 percent of the federal poverty level. With uncertainty at the federal level (see below), the Chapter will continue to monitor this budget carefully.

- **Alabama Department of Public Health:** This year, ADPH has requested \$4 million in additional appropriations to fund HPV, rotavirus, hepatitis A and meningococcal vaccines for non-VFC-eligible children, as well as \$1.2 million to establish Fetal Infant Mortality Review teams, NICU follow-up clinics and community projects to address the recent increase in Alabama's infant mortality rate. The Department is also requesting \$9.3 million additional dollars to fully fund SCHIP. The Chapter supports these additional budget requests to improve health outcomes for our infants and youth.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation:** The Alabama Chapter-AAP supports the ADMH/MR's request for adequate funds to provide needed services for children and fami-



V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, visited with Senator Jeff Sessions on Capitol Hill at the recent Medical Association government affairs meeting to urge support of adequate SCHIP funding.

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"Legislative Day" continued from page 1

Alabama's Children, Mark Jackson of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Carol Steckel, Commissioner of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, and Don Williamson, MD, State Health Officer, who will address current funding and legislative issues.

After the educational session, participants will divide for visits with lawmakers from their own districts. The morning will conclude with boxed lunches served at the Medical Association, two blocks away.

"I urge all pediatricians, including residents and academicians, to join us that day as one voice for pediatrics," said V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, Chapter President.

Pre-registration is necessary; to register, please complete the form that was mailed/faxed to you and fax it to the Chapter office at 334-269-5200; the form can also be downloaded at www.alchapaap.org/legislativeday07.

Open forum addresses important mental health concerns

The Chapter Open Forum on Children's Mental Health, attended by pediatricians, family medicine physicians, parents, third-party payors and state agency leaders on Jan. 27, resulted in a tremendous amount of dialogue on issues facing children's mental health in our state and identification of barriers and possible solutions.

The Chapter Mental Health Advisory Committee came together after the meeting to work on a post-forum white paper that will be distributed to lawmakers, providers, state agencies and other interested organizations as a communication of our values, the issues raised, and recommendations for change.

The next issue of the newsletter will outline the specifics of the white paper, but the general topic areas will include: reimbursement of primary care providers for mental health services and mental health parity; education of primary care providers on mental health issues; mental health professional shortages, particularly in the rural areas; and other general mental health service access issues. The white paper will serve as a blueprint for the committee's continued work on these issues.



A panel discussion on access to mental health services got to the heart of the day's discussions.

Use of Human Papillomavirus Vaccine at the ADPH

By Charles H. Woernle, MD, MPH, Assistant State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention

Human papillomavirus is a double-stranded DNA virus of which over 100 types have been identified. Several of these types are oncogenic. It is estimated that HPV 16 and HPV 18 worldwide account for 54 percent and 13 percent of cervical cancers, respectively. Of the non-oncogenic types, HPV 6 and 11 are most often associated with external anogenital warts.

HPV infection and its clinical manifestations are common. In the US, there are annually about 10,000 new cases of cervical cancer and approximately 1 million new cases of genital warts. The lifetime risk for sexually active people to contract HPV infection is about 50 percent. A 2003 study of female university students demonstrated that the cumulative prevalence of HPV infection reached 50 percent within 52 months of their initiation of sexual activity. A recent study estimated the prevalence of HPV infection was 24 percent among US women aged 14 to 19 years and 45 percent among those aged 20 to 24 years.

Fortunately, many HPV infections do not persist beyond two years. Moreover, the prevalence

of strains of high concern (namely, 16, 18, 6 and 11) is low (1.5 percent or less) in comparison with the overall prevalence of infection. Persistent infection with oncogenic strains is, however, highly associated with an increased risk of dysplasia and cervical cancers.

HPV Vaccine

In June 2006, the FDA licensed a quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine effective against HPV types 6, 11, 16, and 18. Pre-licensure clinical trials demonstrated near 100 percent efficacy in preventing infection from HPV 16 and 18 and associated genital lesions and cervical precursors. Enumerated side effects included pain (84 percent), swelling (25 percent), erythema (25 percent) and pruritus (3 percent) at the injection site and fever (10 percent).

The vaccine is licensed for females aged nine to 26 years. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices provisionally recommended the vaccine for females aged 11 to 12 years, but the VFC (Vaccines for Children program) entitlement

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Event Calendar At a Glance

2007

April 5
4th Annual Pediatric
Legislative Day,
Montgomery, AL

April 26 – 29
2007 Spring Meeting &
Pediatric Update,
Sandestin Golf & Beach
Resort,
Destin, FL

May 11
Children's Hospital
Practical Day of Pediatrics,
Birmingham, AL

September 7 – 9
2007 Fall Meeting, The
Wynfrey Hotel,
Birmingham, AL

October 27 – 30
AAP National Conference
& Exhibition,
San Francisco, CA

2008

April 17 – 20
2008 Spring Meeting &
Pediatric Update,
Sandestin Beach Hilton,
Destin, FL

"HPV" continued from page 3

extends to VFC-eligible females aged nine to 18 years. The vaccine is administered as a three-dose intramuscular series given at intervals of zero, two, and six months. The cost of the vaccine is approximately \$120 per dose, or \$360 for the three-dose series. The vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. Providers should assure that administered HPV immunizations are entered into the statewide immunization registry, ImmPRINT.

Implementation Issues

To be effective, the vaccine must be given to females not yet infected with the HPV types contained in the vaccine. Thus, to assure this important precondition, it is preferable to administer the vaccine prior to the initiation of sexual activity. This reality often raises parental concerns about using a vaccine whose benefit is predicated on their daughter's future sexual activity and her likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted virus. Many parents might feel uncomfortable with this prospect. This issue is at the forefront in discussions about the appropriateness of government requiring a vaccine that is so highly effective at preventing a cancer-causing infection. The debate centers on government's societal duty to prevent life-threatening conditions and a parent's right to make an informed health-related decision about her/his daughter.

Immunization mandates as a condition of attending school or day care centers evolved during an era when childhood vaccine-preventable diseases, many of which were transmitted by airborne or respiratory droplets, were common. Society has generally accepted these requirements, helping foster up-to-date immunization rates among children. High immunization rates can be achieved, however, without mandates. For example, hepatitis B vaccination is not mandated in Alabama, but 2005 survey data show 94 percent completion of the three-dose series among Alabama children aged 19 to 35 months.

Before any vaccine is required, it is important that there are adequate funding mechanisms through government and third-party payers, a stable and predictable vaccine supply, and support and acceptance for the vaccine among providers and the public. The rationale for linking immunizations to school and day care center attendance is weakened for those diseases not readily spread by casual contact in a congregated setting. Adding "controversial" vaccines to such a list of required immunizations may erode public support for currently mandated immunizations. In general, the Alabama Department of Public Health prefers to promote the voluntary adoption of new vaccines, especially for non-respiratorily transmitted diseases.

ADPH Actions

ADPH has begun to receive its allocation of HPV vaccine for VFC-eligible females. Shipments of HPV vaccine to Alabama's participating VFC providers began in January. At first, it was anticipated that because of initial vaccine supplies, ADPH would adopt a "phased-in" approach for VFC-eligible females (e.g., only those 11 and 12 years of age). However, recent federal guidance has clarified that HPV vaccine should be made available to all VFC-eligible females aged nine to 18 years. ADPH has notified VFC providers of this change. HPV vaccine is covered by ALL Kids and, to a variable degree, other third-party payers in Alabama.

As new vaccines become VFC entitlements, it has been difficult for ADPH to assure an adequate supply to immunize non-VFC-eligible children. ADPH strives not to operate a "two-tiered" system in which it provides vaccines to VFC-eligible children but not to non-eligible children. Because of its high cost, this dilemma was especially stark for HPV vaccine. ADPH is pursuing additional state funding for fiscal year 2008 to assure that non-VFC-eligible females who seek services at departmental clinics can also be immunized with HPV vaccine.

In closing, the advent of HPV vaccine holds tremendous promise for contributing to the eventual elimination of cervical cancer and reducing the prevalence of genital warts. ADPH strongly promotes its widespread use and hopes its utilization will quickly mirror that of hepatitis B vaccine, with voluntary and rapid attainment of high immunization rates.

From the Coordinator

Barnes & Noble holds book drive for Reach Out and Read sites in south Alabama

Young patients at three south Alabama Reach Out and Read sites—USA Pediatric Clinic; Blancher and Stadther Pediatrics in Mobile; and Mostellar Clinic in Bayou Le Batre—were the beneficiaries of more than 300 new books collected at a recent book drive at Barnes & Noble in Springdale Mall in Mobile.

The book store coordinated the drive with First Book, a non-profit organization that gives



Representatives from First Book and the Literacy Council enjoy a "reading" moment with Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, Joe Stadther, MD, and their patients.

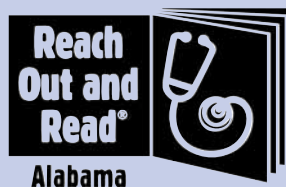
children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new book. First Book works with the Literacy Coalition of South Alabama—an ROR-Alabama partner—to help identify the most-effective, community-based literacy programs to reach children living at or below the poverty line and provide them with free books.

"We are delighted to give our customers an opportunity to give the gift of reading and literacy to others in our community," said Ken Turner, assistant store manager at Barnes & Noble.

Many thanks to all three of these organizations for their contributions to our south Alabama sites.

Alabama Civil Justice Foundation Grant Award

Thanks to attorneys from across the state, ROR-Alabama has received \$3,000 from the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation (ACJF). The grant check was presented by April W. Robinson, a local attorney and participating member of the ACJF on February 28.



"Attorneys seek justice for their clients each day. Our philanthropic efforts through the ACJF provide us with a wonderful opportunity to expand this responsibility beyond our daily work," Ms. Robinson said. "There are 1,650 attorneys in Alabama who participate with the ACJF and we are so pleased to be able to partner with organizations such as Reach Out and Read.

"Lawyers participate with the ACJF by making contributions, establishing donor advised funds, and designating their trust account interest to the ACJF," Ms. Robinson added.

—Polly



A mother and her child receive a book from Linda Reeves, MD, FAAP, while attorney April Robinson looks on.

Alabama Chapter-AAP 2007 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update

Speakers & Topics

William A. Lutin, MD, PhD, FAAP, FACC, Professor of Pediatrics (Cardiology) and Director, MCG Pediatric Cardiology Fellowship Training Program, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, GA

- Heart Murmurs in Children, Innocent or Guilty: A Pathophysiology-Based Approach
- Prevention of Sudden Cardiac Death in Child Athletes: What Can a Pediatrician Do?
- Problem Cases in Pediatric Cardiology (Workshop)

Jeffrey S. Hyams, MD, FAAP, Head, Division of Digestive Diseases, Hepatology, and Nutrition, Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Professor of Pediatrics, University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Hartford, CT

- Emerging Concepts of Functional Abdominal Pain In Children
- Diagnosing and Managing IBD: Moving into the 21st Century

Patricia S. Simmons, MD, FAAP, Professor of Pediatrics, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, MN

- Breast Masses in Adolescents: First Do No Harm!
- Pediatric Gynecology: Tips and Tricks

Michelle G. Brenner, MD, IBCLC, FAAP, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, VA

- Milk & Money: Providing Efficient, Effective, & Reimbursable Breastfeeding Support
- Infant Sleep: SIDS, SUID, & Suggestions

2007 Spring Meeting & Pediatric Update continued from page 5

Jose E. Martinez, MD, FAAP, Professor, Departments of Medical Genetics and Pediatrics, and Director of Clinical Services, Department of Medical Genetics, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL

- The Dysmorphic Child: Finding Clues of a Genetic Diagnosis

Jayne M. Ness, MD-PhD, FAAP, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Neurology, and Director, Center for Pediatric-Onset Demyelinating Disease, University of Alabama at Birmingham

- The Spectrum of Pediatric Demyelinating Disease: Sorting Through the Alphabet Soup from ADEM to MS

Joel S. Brenner, MD, MPH, FAAP, Director, Division of Sports Medicine and Adolescent Medicine, and Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, Norfolk, VA

- Knees, Ankles, and Feet: Evaluation and Diagnosis (Workshop)

Carol Herrmann-Steckel, MPH, Commissioner, Alabama Medicaid Agency

- Transforming Alabama Medicaid and What It Means for Alabama Pediatricians and Children

Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD, FAAP—President, American Academy of Pediatrics

- AAP Update: The President's Report

V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, President, Alabama Chapter-AAP

- Alabama Chapter-AAP Update

"Legislative Update" continued from page 4

lies. The Chapter will work with this agency to determine how we can help deliver key messages to our legislators and governor about the need for additional services for children in our state's mental health system.

• SB 35 – The Shaken Baby Syndrome

Education Bill has been introduced to require hospitals and birthing centers to provide written information to parents regarding Shaken Baby Syndrome. The Chapter Executive Board supports this bill, and is currently working on ways to strengthen and support this important legislation.

• **HB 42** – This year, the Chapter will again support Representative Jim McClendon's **teen driver cell phone bill**, which would make it a violation for teens 17 years and younger to use a cellular or wireless communications device while operating a motor vehicle. The bill is part of a package to strengthen highway safety laws, grouped to secure a higher profile and dedicated place on the legislative agenda.

Among this package of bills will be a **strengthened graduated teen driver license law**, which would limit the number of passengers that teens can carry from four to one, excluding a parent or legal guardian.

• This year, the Chapter Executive Board has endorsed VOICES for Alabama's Children's efforts to expand **state-funded, high-quality, pre-k programs** for four year olds. Through the Alabama School Readiness Alliance. VOICES is endorsing increased funding for the Office of School Readiness from \$5 million to at least \$10 million.

• **HB 199** - Representative Laura Hall has introduced legislation in the Alabama House of Representatives that would create a category of a **"Certified Professional Midwife License"** without requiring a nursing program as a prerequisite. The bill defines "midwifery" as the "practice of providing maternity services to women during the prenatal, intrapartum, and postpartum period, and to newborn infants during the transition period, in a variety of settings, including homes, birth centers, hospitals." Because of the obvious healthcare risks associated with placing pregnant women and their babies in the exclusive materni-

ty care of lay midwives, the Chapter Executive Board is opposed to this legislation and is sending letters to the House Health Committee.

2007 Federal Legislative Update

• **Proposed Rule Change for Medicaid state payment formula** – President George Bush's budget introduced in February calls for both legislative and regulatory change, including a proposed CMS rule that would impose new restrictions on how states fund their Medicaid programs. These restrictions, including limits on intergovernmental transfers and certified public expenditures, would significantly reduce the state's federal match by as much as \$700 million, which could literally shut down the Medicaid program. Governor Bob Riley has written letters to President Bush and Alabama's Congressional delegation to oppose this rule. The Chapter will write letters to our Congressional delegation as well.

• **SCHIP reauthorization** – After 10 years of success in reducing the number of uninsured children, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (promoted in Alabama as ALL Kids) is up for reauthorization this year. President George Bush's 2007 budget calls for this reauthorization, but at funding levels that would reduce the number of children served—including a substantial reduction in Alabama's program!

Child advocates have been hard at work urging Congress to fund SCHIP at levels that would support mature SCHIP programs and continue to encourage state flexibility.

Chapter members made phone calls in February and Chapter President V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, sent a letter to Governor Bob Riley asking for his support of adequate funding for SCHIP. Gayle Sandlin, state Director of ALL Kids, has testified in Washington on the huge success of Alabama's program in narrowing the uninsured window for children. Chapter members will continue to be called upon to make contact with Congress, as legislation surrounding this reauthorization is introduced in the next several months.

Introducing the Parenting Assistance Line (PAL)

Generally, parents greet the birth of a child with thoughts of cuddling and rocking sweet smelling bundles of joy. The reality is that parents and caregivers can become overwhelmed, exhausted and stressed. Isolation and inability to access resources are exacerbated in rural communities and in communities with insufficient public transportation resources.

To provide assistance and support to parents/caregivers of children from birth to age 12, a toll-free statewide **Parenting Assistance Line (PAL)** became available on March 21. Conceived by Patsy Riley, First Lady of Alabama, PAL is a collaborative service of the University of Alabama Child Development Research Center in partnership with Wal-Mart, the Alabama Children's Trust Fund (the Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention), the Alabama Department of Mental Health/Mental Retardation and the State Department of Human Resources.

Parent resource specialists are available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday at 1-866-962-3030. Callers voice their concerns, and are provided support and information about their child's development at specific ages, strategies for coping with children's behavior, and methods of reducing and coping with anger and frustration, even during challenging times. Although the calls are confidential, callers can also request free literature about their specific parenting concerns as well as local resources.

"PAL is not a crisis line, but rather a way to reduce risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect before the matter escalates to a crisis level," said Marian Loftin, Director of the Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, which oversees the Alabama Children's Trust Fund.

An intensive media campaign is being developed to include billboards, radio and television public service announcements, as well as in-house information and posters in Wal-Mart stores throughout the state. For more information, visit www.pal.ua.edu.

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**We will support
your Spring
meeting
April 26-29, 2007,
in Sandestin.**

**Please stop
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PRACTICAL DAY OF PEDIATRICS 2007

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2007

7:30AM - 4:30PM

AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL BRADLEY LECTURE CENTER

25th Annual Bradford Dean Dixon Memorial Lecture:

"Hanta Virus: Natural History and Implications for Humans"

PABLO AGUSTIN VIAL, MD

Professor, School of Medicine of Clínica Alemana/Universidad del
Desarrollo de Santiago, Chile

19th Annual Hugh C. Dillon Memorial Lecture:

"Managing Concussion in the High School Athlete"

ANDREW JOHN MAXWELL GREGORY, MD, FAAP, FACSM

Assistant Professor, Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

Assistant Professor, Pediatrics

Program Director, Pediatric Sports Medicine Fellowship

Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Other Lecture Topics Include:

- Treating Adolescents with Eating Disorders
- Depression in the Pediatric Population
- Internet Crimes Against Children
- Genetic Testing: A Primer for 2007
- The Patient's Rights of Adolescents
- Practical Approaches to Diagnosis & Treatment of Overweight Children and Youth
- What to do When Uterine Bleeding is Abnormal



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C H A P T E R B R I E F S

Chapter nominated as Outstanding Chapter of the Year by AAP

Each year, the Alabama Chapter-AAP submits an annual report to the American Academy of Pediatrics, along with its counterparts in other states. These reports are reviewed by the District Vice Chairs and Chapters are nominated for the Outstanding Chapter Award in four chapter size divisions.

This year, the Chapter is pleased to announce that it has been selected as a nominee for this award! Chapter President V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, will now make a presentation to the committee at the upcoming Annual Leadership Forum before final selection of awardees takes place.

"Regardless of the outcome, yours is a proud record, worthy of high praise," wrote Pat Stein, Manager of District Relations at the AAP, in her letter to Dr. Reddy.

Congratulations to all Chapter members who have helped make this nomination possible!

Reddy promoted to Clinical Professor

V.H. Reddy, MD, FAAP, president of the Alabama Chapter-AAP and a community pediatrician in Scottsboro, has been promoted to the rank of Clinical Professor of Pediatrics on the volunteer faculty of the UAB School of Medicine, Huntsville Regional Campus. The promotion was announced by Robert M. Centor, MD, Associate Dean of the Huntsville Regional Campus, who commended Dr. Reddy on his caliber and willingness to support the university's programs. Congratulations, Dr. Reddy!

Expanded Newborn Screening Update

By S. Lane Rutledge, MD, FAAP, UAB Faculty Member

We have recently added screening for glutaric academia Type 1. I wish all of you could see an affected patient to know how devastating this condition is and how wonderful it is to prevent that devastation. We may need to adjust our cut-offs for GA1 and we are constantly re-analyzing our data to try and decrease the false positive rate. We are adding screening for defects in long chain fatty acid oxidation. These defects can be fatal when untreated but can be very treatable. Any time we institute a new test, we do have to work the kinks out, so bear with us. Please let us know of problems; we can't fix it if we don't know about it.

Injury Prevention Committee solicits members

Chapter member Kathy Monroe, MD, FAAP, Professor of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at UAB, is working to develop a Chapter Committee on Injury Prevention.

"We are looking for all individuals interested in public outreach or the education of health care workers in the area of injury prevention," she said. "We hope to share ideas, support each other's efforts and work together on projects that would benefit the entire state."

Dr. Monroe will establish a listserv for the committee. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Monroe at kmonroe@peds.uab.edu or (205) 939-9587 for additional information.

Chapter partners with agencies to promote standardized developmental screening

Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, and the Chapter office have been working in concert with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation on several grant proposals to establish more standardized developmental screening protocols in our state.

Partnering with the Department of Public Health, the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the Alabama Partnership for Children and Alabama's Early Intervention System, the organizations recently completed a grant application from the National Academy for State Health Policy to provide technical assistance to the state in creating adoption of a standardized screening tool recognized by third-party payors.

Members take part in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention State Plan Task Force

Chapter officers Mia Amaya, MD, FAAP, and Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, have played a part in the re-structuring of the state plan for child abuse and neglect prevention.

The goals of the plan restructuring are to: increase available funding for community-based prevention programming by 50 percent by 2010; decrease the number of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases as report by DHR by 10 percent by 2011; and improve Alabama's performance in the nineteen indicator areas for child well-being based on the Alabama Kids Count Data.

The plan revision is expected to be completed early this year.

Fall Meeting plans shaping up

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our Fall/Annual Meeting, to be held Sept. 7 - 9, 2007 at The Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham.

Plans call for a pre-conference, half-day coding workshop on Friday, which will be a joint effort of the Chapter and the Alabama Chapter-AAP Practice Management Association.

Topic areas confirmed for the main meeting thus far include behavioral/developmental pediatrics, hematology and vaccines.

Stay tuned for more information, coming soon!

Rural health initiatives

The ADPH Office of Primary Care and Rural Health (OPCRH) conducts and promotes activities to improve access to health care services for rural Alabamians with special concern for children, elderly, minorities and other medically underserved vulnerable populations. Current initiatives include:

- *Telemedicine:* Several initiatives are being pursued to bring high-level tertiary and specialty care to rural communities through the use of state-of-the-art health and telecommunications technologies. The OPCRH is coordinating the Alabama response to the Federal Communications Commission Pilot Project Grant Opportunity to fund broadband networks of public and not-for-profit health care facilities. The Alabama Chapter-AAP has been a partner in this initiative.

- *Health Insurance Website:* In conjunction with the Governor's Action Commission on the Black Belt, the OPCRH is developing an Alabama Health Insurance Website to serve as a resource to small business owners and consumers regarding health insurance options in our state. Small business and consumer focus groups are being planned throughout the state to assist with content development.

- *Practice Sights Medical Provider and Placement Software:* In an effort to improve and streamline the recruitment and retention efforts for primary care providers in rural Alabama, the OPCRH will implement a software physician placement package consisting of an extremely comprehensive system that will enhance existing Alabama recruitment efforts through the National Health Service Corp and J-1 programs.

For more information on these initiatives, contact Carolyn Bern at 334-206-5436 or carolynbern@adph.state.al.us.

Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA) promotes pre-kindergarten expansion in Alabama

For many years, VOICES for Alabama's Children and other organizations focused on school readiness have shared a vision that emphasizes the importance of providing quality early learning opportunities for children. Today, evidence supporting this vision is even more clear and compelling, showing that the first five years of life are critical to a child's lifelong development.

In hopes of greatly expanding pre-kindergarten options for Alabama's children to lay the foundation for learning and close achievement gaps, four statewide organizations— VOICES for Alabama's Children, Alabama Partnership for Children, A+ Education Foundation and Alabama Giving—have come together to form the Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA).

ASRA's goal is for every parent in Alabama who wishes to enroll a child in a quality pre-k program to be able to do so. Members of the Alliance believe that school readiness means that a child has enthusiasm for learning, the ability to function in a social setting, age-appropriate physical and emotional skills, and optimal health. Children will not enter school ready to learn unless families, schools and communities provide early learning environments and experiences that support these factors.

Although there are now 60 pre-k sites in Alabama funded through the Office of School Readiness, fewer than 2 percent of our four-year-old children are being served in these programs. ASRA is seeking to build a strong, broad-based network of individuals and organizations working together to advocate for voluntary, high-quality pre-k options for all families who choose them. Providing these opportunities is not only our shared concern, but our responsibility.

Pediatricians can help by educating parents of their patients, when appropriate, about the benefits of high quality pre-K programs and how to identify a high quality program. ASRA can provide resources to help with this.

The Alabama Chapter-AAP has signed a statement of public support for this initiative, and individuals are encouraged to sign up as well at www.alavoices.org, which offers further information on ASRA. If you have questions, contact Criss Hopson at chopson@alavoices.org.

NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

National Public Health Week—April 2 – 8

The Alabama Chapter-AAP has signed on as a partner in the Alabama Department of Public Health's (ADPH) observance of National Public Health Week, set for April 2-8, 2007, to educate mothers with children living in the household to become better prepared to address a public health threat or emergency.

In early March, more than 20 pediatricians from across the state ordered ADPH's free family disaster planning book, "Are You Ready," to distribute to all parents coming in to their offices on Monday, April 2. Other activities include fliers distributed to churches and a media campaign. The Chapter encourages you to participate by spreading the preparedness message (visit the Chapter Web site at www.alchapaap.org for talking points).

In addition, if you are interested in serving as a media spokesperson if the need arises in your local area, or have questions, please contact the Chapter office at 334-954-2543 or llee@aap.net. For more information, visit www.nphw.org.

NEWS FROM MEDICAID

Medicaid embarks on \$7.6 million “Together for Quality” transformation initiative

Boosted by a new \$7.6 million federal grant announced in January by Governor Bob Riley, the Alabama Medicaid Agency is now leading a broad-based effort to transform the state’s fragmented claims and process-oriented system into one that is coordinated, patient-centered and cost-efficient.

Alabama’s proposal, “*Together for Quality*,” was one of 130 proposals from more than 40 states receiving federal funds appropriated in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 to encourage states to transform their Medicaid operations. The two-year grant will be used to create a statewide electronic health information system (HIS) that links Medicaid, state health agencies, providers and private payers while establishing a comprehensive, quality improvement model for the Alabama Medicaid program.

Specifically, the initiative will couple the development of a central data system that includes claims, immunization records, laboratory results and electronic health records with a clinical support tool for providers to create a dynamic and responsive quality improvement system. This HIS will provide data necessary to establish baselines, set targets and monitor progress, transforming the Agency from a highly vulnerable, process-oriented, provider-centric, bureaucratic model into a fully transparent, result-oriented system that consistently asks the most important question of all: are Medicaid beneficiaries getting healthier? This grant will allow for the collection and organization of claims-based health records for chronic disease management, design specific provider and beneficiary education and incentive programs (pay for performance), and improve collaboration across health and human service agencies.

Medicaid has already enlisted the assistance of an advisory stakeholder council with more than 100 representatives from healthcare provider associations, other state agencies, private health plans, health care purchasers, health information technology entities, business, academia, patient groups, and quality improvement organizations to create an alignment between leaders in both the public and private sectors.

Council members, including at least five pediatricians representing our Chapter, joined Alabama Medicaid staff for a two-day session on March 8 and 9 to establish five workgroups—

Legal, Policy, Clinical, Finance, and Technical—to begin planning and implementing the two-year initiative. Each workgroup has been challenged to assist in transforming a process-oriented, paper-driven system into one that is coordinated, patient-centered and cost-efficient.

The Chapter will continue to keep its members updated on this initiative. For more detailed information or to get involved, log on to www.medicaid.alabama.gov or contact Carroll Nason at carroll.nason@medicaid.alabama.gov or 334-242-2290.

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