

Section Update #11 – Survey Shenanigans

Although the title of this update is lighthearted, I am writing to you about a significant issue today. Many of you received an emailed request in the last day or so to participate in a survey on hypoglycemia that appeared to be from the SONPM. First, let me clarify that this was not a SONPM approved or sponsored survey, but it brings up several issues that are important to address.

1. We have great respect for the privacy of our members. We do not sell access to our Listserv and we intentionally limit the number of surveys and other communications sent out from the SONPM so that members continue to read and find value in our selected and meaningful communications. Our members are listed in the AAP directory and this list can be sorted by any of us to see the members of our Section. This resource is intended to facilitate contact between individual colleagues, not to allow access for researchers, commercial interests or others who want to capitalize on access to a large professional group. We are now engaged in discussions with AAP leadership about the possible inappropriate access of member information and how we can protect our members' privacy as a paramount value, but still benefit from the ability to look up and connect with our colleagues. If you have ideas about how to perfect this balance, I would love to hear your suggestions.
2. We do recognize the value of having research access to the SONPM Listserv as an important member benefit. That is why we do offer the opportunity to conduct surveys using this valuable Listserv although we don't want to inundate member mailboxes with so many requests that they are an undue burden. Therefore, we have a proscribed process to access this resource. Candidate surveys can be submitted for consideration through the process outlined in the attachment below. A group of dedicated and experienced neonatologists field the many many requests to access the membership. Please join me in thanking Carl Bose, DeWayne Pursley, Howard Kilbride and David Burchfield for their thoughtful service in this role. This group has an exceptional high-level perspective on what constitutes an effective survey; which may even include the timing relative to other planned surveys so that members do not develop SONPM survey fatigue. For proposals that are not initially considered adequately elegant enough to be worthy of our members' time, feedback is provided to guide improvement. Surveys that have been screened and approved will be distributed via the official SONPM Listserv with the following sender email: peri-distall@listserv.aap.org. There are other ways to reach survey populations, but please respect the process for accessing the SONPM membership if you want to take advantage of this member benefit.

Some comments actually brought up the possibility of connecting with retired neonatologists through such a Listserv. That might be a boon to our senior members, and we might follow up by facilitating an activity focused on reconnecting with old friends at some point, but we will continue to operate the main SONPM listserv as a moderated platform, with some screening of Reply All responses. There is some finesse to designing listserv rules for optimal monitoring and functioning, depending on the characteristics of each group.

The specific independent survey that prompted this discussion has been taken down and those researchers will either resubmit through our established process or distribute through alternative routes.

3. We were concerned about the tone of the thread that unfolded in the wake of distribution of this survey. It is important to be mindful of the "Reply All" option and how it fills up mailboxes

and can add to the work and hassle of many when used thoughtlessly, but there was dialogue about inappropriate ways to express frustration. Such frustrations are real and can drive others to leave a listserv, depriving us all of their input. On the other hand, the vitriol of some responses prompted some Section members to reach out to express concern that the unprofessional language and aggressive messaging may reflect the stress that many of us are experiencing in this prolonged public health crisis we are weathering together. One more unsolicited survey request may be a tipping point for some. Although it is never appropriate to treat each other with less than professional cordiality on such a public platform, I am heartened to see the empathy with which we consider each others' outbursts. We are a widespread but close community. Whether sponsored by the Section or outside SONPM, please be kind in how we treat each other in public—we need one other now more than ever. Check in with your colleagues who may be expressing more frustrations than typical and make sure they are okay.

Thank you for reading this update, for understanding the distinction between SONPM sponsored surveys and other independent research. I hope you will consider the ability to survey the Section membership as an important member benefit. We will continue to be thoughtful about what we send out through the section Listserv. Please let me know if you feel we are sending out too many messages or not communicating enough. Thank you for engaging in the dialogue, calling us to account for professional respect and being insightful about how each of us is doing in these stressful times.

Take care and thank you for your membership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lily', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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