SONS Mission

The Section on Neurological Surgery (SONs) addresses issues common to pediatric neurosurgery patient management, continuing education, clinical research, and interaction with the members of the American Academy of Pediatrics in an effort to improve the care of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults with neurosurgical disorders.

Message from the Chairman

For the past year, our lives have been overshadowed by COVID, COVID, COVID. Our efforts to establish an AAP national pediatric neurosurgery database, increase membership in SONS, and proactive involvement of our Advocacy and Policy subcommittee with the Washington Offices of the AANS/CNS and AAP were derailed. Rather we turned out attention to helping our colleagues deal with COVID by sharing best practices in a series of webinars.

We now refocus on the bright future of SONS. Over the next year, we will renew our discussion with the Washington Offices of our parent organizations. We will undertake a project to create a digital library of pediatric neurosurgical talks for pediatricians. This will offer an opportunity not only to add to the knowledge base our pediatric colleagues but also allow SONS membership the privilege to create enduring educational materials.

We will continue to concentrate on ways to demonstrate value to members and prospective members to increase our numbers within SONS. There are new subcommittees in the works including a Database subcommittee and an APP subcommittee. Pediatric neurosurgical APPs are a segment of the market which we would like to cater towards. With education of APPs in pediatric neurosurgery as its nucleus, an APP subcommittee could align with a major mission of SONS.

Over the next few months, SONS will discuss repurposing the time allotted for its business meeting at the AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurosurgery annual meeting. Perhaps, there would be interest in creating a “mini-scientific session” for SONS membership to discuss abstracts centered on health outcomes research, quality and patient safety, health economics, and advocacy for pediatric neurosurgical patients.

We look forward to challenging you to “dare greatly” with SONS over the next year!

Sincerely,

Andrew Jea FAAP
Chair, Executive Committee
andrew-jea@ouhsc.edu
News from the AAP

AAP to launch pilot sites for CHILD registry

Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff, AAP News Associate Editor

January 01, 2021

The Academy plans to roll out a number of pilot sites later this year for the new AAP Child Health Improvement through Longitudinal Data (CHILD) registry.

The national pediatric registry aims to gather data on every child from birth to age 21, making it the first of its kind in the scope and magnitude of health information it will generate for pediatricians, subspecialists and others who have stake in pediatric health care, including researchers, hospitals, educators, policymakers and public health experts.

Super-tool for pediatrics

Population health data from a registry has been called the future of medical practice and health care financing.

The ability to understand populations better is a powerful tool, said AAP Board Member Charles G. Macias, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP. Multiple levels of data will be available from the registry.

“By connecting the data from a pediatrician, from a hospital, from a specialist, we begin to create a picture of the entirety of a child’s health care,” Dr. Macias said. “If we can improve on the holistic approach to the care of children because of a deeper understanding about the social determinants of health, their behavioral and mental health, the management of their disease, we can build comprehensive views of the total life of a child and follow it over time. That’s what’s really powerful.”

As pediatricians more efficiently track the health outcomes of their patients, timely data from a common platform can help them make changes to improve conditions such as asthma. The registry also will help streamline reporting to payers and assist in quality improvement (QI) efforts and value-based care.

Researchers would have access to unique datasets. Hospital groups could glean national benchmarking data. Public health experts, government agencies, payers and others could advocate for the most effective policies during surveillance and management of diseases such as in pandemics or other emergencies.

“COVID just shows how timely this is,” Christoph U. Lehmann, M.D., FAAP, told the AAP Board of Directors. Dr. Lehmann, founding medical director of the AAP Child Health Informatics Center, headed a group of pediatric experts who helped refine the concept and business plan, and reviewed vendor proposals. The team recommended and the board approved ArborMetrix of Ann Arbor, Mich., which has created other medical registries.

Dr. Macias agreed that if the registry were in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, with data being imported from thousands of pediatric practices, “the quantifying impact would be huge.”

Member preferences

The AAP conducted more than 40 interviews with members across various settings to determine what they would look for in a registry. All of them mentioned the potential public health benefits, plus the following:

• **Large group practices** cited clinical and health services research and national benchmarking, followed by higher payment, ability to define quality and internal QI. One said: “I can see a tremendous amount of value being added to my practice from the CHILD registry.”

• **Small pediatric practices** singled out national benchmarking, internal QI and the ability to define quality. One remarked: “As a pediatrician it would be great to see research come out of CHILD that decreases ‘parental anxiety’ (e.g., children who are/are not breastfed) and correlated health markers.”

• **Children’s hospitals** were interested in the ability to define quality, followed by national benchmarking and clinical and health services research.

*Continued on Page 3*
• **Hospital chains** said they valued national benchmarking and the ability to do clinical and health services research and define quality. "One of this registry's greatest utilities could be confirming or changing the health measures we are already required to report as pediatricians," an interviewee noted.

**Logistics**

The registry will draw from electronic health records (EHRs) and other registries and data sources. Because at least 94% of office-based pediatricians already use an EHR, there is a vast amount of untapped data. Gaps in care and regional variations also would become apparent.

Only aggregate, de-identified data will be shared from participants; ArborMetrix will collect, store and analyze the health data in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and handle interoperability with EHR systems. A data governance group will ensure privacy and ethical use of the data.

Costs to join the registry have not been determined.

**Grand view**

The overarching theme, according to AAP leaders, is that the data registry will offer a unique opportunity to positively impact the health of children. AAP CEO/Executive Vice President Mark Del Monte, J.D., has called the registry a bold and innovative idea. AAP Immediate Past President Sara “Sally” H. Goza, M.D., FAAP, said “it is part of the AAP mission.”

Dr. Macias said the registry “is shifting the way that we think in a data-driven way. It will really become a tool for pediatricians, public health officials — really any stakeholder who's engaged in pediatrics.”

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**AAP Advocacy**

The most recent AAP [Advocacy Report](#) was published in December 2020. This report summarizes AAP's recent COVID-19 federal and state advocacy activities all in one place. This seventh edition provides updates on AAP’s federal and state advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic and links to a [summary](#) of the COVID-related provisions of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

All prior COVID-19 advocacy reports, letters, and advocacy resources pertaining to the pandemic can be found on the [advocacy subsite](#) of the AAP's main COVID-19 page.

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**AAP Blueprint for Children**

Continued on Page 4
A Child Health Policy Agenda for 2020 and Beyond

Following a period of uncertainty marked by a global pandemic and a national moment of racial reckoning, we are facing potential transitions in leadership: from the White House, to Congress, to the Supreme Court, and to the states. Children, families and communities are counting on our nation’s leaders to act and advance policies that keep them healthy and safe.

We can and must do more for children.

That is why the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has updated its Blueprint for Children, which outlines a comprehensive child health policy agenda for 2020 and beyond.

This Blueprint for Children makes clear how much is at stake. It reflects on the State of Children in 2020 and recommends policies to promote healthy children, support secure families, build strong communities, and reclaim America’s role as a leading nation for youth.

History shows us that when we invest in children, we invest in our country’s future.

To read the Blueprint for Children, please visit AAP.org/Blueprint.

Learn More About the AAP’s Blueprint for Children:

The State of Children in 2020

Policies that Promote Healthy Children

The federal government must use every tool at its disposal to address the public health crises facing children and adolescents.

Policies that Secure Families

Policies to address poverty, provide access to nutritious foods, and ensure health care coverage to help support families.

Policies to Promote Strong Communities

Our nation must ensure that all children and families live in safe communities that address systemic inequalities.

Policies to Ensure Our Role as a Leading Nation for Youth

Our leaders must show their commitment to the future by investing in child and adolescent health—within our borders and beyond.

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®
GET INVOLVED!

Hey all. Just a friendly reminder from your neurosurgical hype-man to GET INVOLVED. We have a number of opportunities for members to engage in education, advocacy, and policy.

**Education:** Contributions of proposals for educational sessions at the AAP National Convention, articles for AAP News, and judges for the SONS award at the Pediatric Section meeting are needed ANNUALLY. Exploring your state AAP Chapter for opportunities can provide you with access to a large target audience of your largest customer base- your referring pediatricians.

**Policy/Advocacy:** Do you have a specific advocacy interest? Join a council (https://services.aap.org/en/community/aap-councils/) and gain access to all that a 68,000 member audience can do to advocate for issues you are passionate about.

**New opportunities in 2021:** Subcommittees are being created to explore database creation, a SONS mini-scientific meeting at the pediatric section, and an advanced practice provider committee to drive APP engagement. Interested? Join us!

**Membership**

Congratulations to our new SONS members! Membership will provide you with unparalleled access to resources allowing you to impact the patients and families you serve! We value members at all levels of training (medical students, residents, fellows, attending providers and allied health professionals). Together, we can shape the future of pediatric neurosurgical care.

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We would also like to thank our renewing members – your commitment to SONS is essential to the success of our organization!

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Annual meetings

2020 AAP National Conference and Exhibition

The 2020 NCE was conducted virtually on October 2-5th. Neurosurgery was represented with two presentations by SONS members:

- ‘Big heads and what to do about them’ was presented by Drs Eylem Ocal and Brandon Rocque
- ‘Head to head: craniosynostosis versus positional plagiocephaly’ was presented by Dr. Lance Governale

2020 AANS/CNS Pediatric Section Meeting

The 2020 AANS/CNS Pediatric section meeting was conducted virtually on December 2-4. The AAP SONS sponsors one afternoon session and one award at the meeting annually.

SONS speaker

SONS sponsors an annual lectureship with the goal to ‘educate pediatric neurosurgeons on important current medical topics that affect the health of pediatric neurosurgical patients’.

This year’s speaker was Dr. Sarah ‘Sally’ Goza, the 2020 president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. In her talk ‘Pediatrics: A bright future’, Dr. Goza shared her perspective gained from nearly 30 years of involvement with issues related to pediatric Advocacy. She discussed her signature initiative, the Child Health Improvement Through Longitudinal Data (CHILD) registry. Her question and answer session provided valuable perspective on strategies for the pursuit of advocacy for small subspecialty organizations such as pediatric neurosurgery.

SONS Award

SONS sponsors an annual award for ‘an oral research presentation whose findings broadly impact and improve the health of children by influencing pediatric health care practice through the application of pediatric neurosurgical knowledge.

This year’s award went to Dr. Randaline Barnett for her abstract “Implementation of Telemedicine in Pediatric Neurosurgical Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Does Virtual Care Perpetuate Health Care Disparities?” Dr. Barnett is a fifth year resident at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. For her efforts to explore both the value and pitfalls of telemedicine, Dr. Barnett received a complimentary one-year AAP membership and a monetary award.

SONS Committees

SONS Policy and Advocacy Committee

The Policy and Advocacy Committee has continued to review documents and position statements submitted to the AAP for update or endorsement. Recent topics have included:

- Bright Futures Guidelines, 4th Edition regarding positional plagiocephaly
- AAP Policy Statement: Ensuring Access to Critical Health Information for Children during emergencies
- AAP Clinical Report: Evaluation of Bleeding Disorders in Suspected Child Abuse

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SONS Policy and Advocacy Committee  Continued from Page 6

• AAP Technical Report: Evaluating for suspected child abuse: conditions that predispose to bleeding
• Second International Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Hereditary Hemorrhagic Telangiectasia (HHT)
• Engaged with COVIDSurg Collaborative
• Reviewed letter from pediatric neurosurgeons to Karl Storz regarding potential discontinuation of their flexible endoscope line

SONS also partnered with the section on plastic surgery to write the following:
• AAP Clinical Report: Identifying the misshapen head: craniosynostosis and related disorders

Members seeking information or having thoughts/ideas related to policy and advocacy can contact Dr Bauer at dfbauer@mac.com.

SONS Education, Newsletter, and Publication (ENP) committee

The ENP committee has continued to engage with the assistance of membership to execute the mission of SONS

• Kudos to Drs. Greg Albert, Lance Governale, Greg Olavarria, and Jeffrey Raskin for submitting proposals for presentations at the 2021 AAP National Conference and Exhibition in Philadelphia, PA. COVID-19 delayed review of these submissions by the AAP. We anticipate an update on the status of these submissions sometime later this spring.

• Many thanks to Drs. Greg Olavarria, Nathan Ranalli, and Brandon Rocque for their assistance with judging for the SONS award at the Pediatric Section meeting in December. The group reviewed abstracts from 51 candidates before selecting Dr. Barnett's work.

• ENP members have been hard at work over the past year developing new educational content on pediatric neurosurgery targeting the primary care audience.
  ○ Work has been completed on an updated Pediatric Neurosurgery for the Primary Care Provider issue of Pediatric Clinics of North America. Edited by Drs Martin and Olavarria, the 16 chapter text will be released in August of 2021, and features articles by a large number of SONS members.
  ○ Efforts are underway to develop content for Pediatric Care Online. Dr. Nathan Ranalli is heading a group developing webinar formatted content on two commonly requested subjects: head shape evaluation and occult spinal dysraphism.

Feeling left out? Want to participate/contribute to ENP efforts? There are several opportunities to get involved regardless of your membership category

• 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics National Convention and Exposition Session Proposals: Make a pitch for the podium!
  ○ Love to teach primary care audiences? Submit your idea for a session at the 2022 AAP NCE in Anaheim, California
  ○ Submissions are made online at the Call for Session Proposal website (anticipated availability online mid-February 2021)
  ○ Submissions for the 2022 meeting will close in mid April 2021, with notification of acceptance in October/November of 2021.

• AAP News Article
  ○ Proposals sought for the annual SONS Focus on Subspecialty submission to AAP News. The submission should serve to update, inform, or educate a general pediatric audience on a topic within pediatric neurosurgery where there is new science or renewed interest due to a recent report, policy change, or technical report.
  ○ Submissions are limited to 600-700 words

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SONS Education, Newsletter, and Publication (ENP) committee

- Selected topics must be approved by the AAP News editorial board
- Timeline: topic submission no later than May 1st with manuscript due June 1st
- SONS Award Abstract Judging
  - Volunteers are always welcome to assist with judging of abstracts at the Pediatric Section Meeting in December. Volunteers need only attend the meeting, review eligible abstracts, and participate in 2 short meetings (typically 30 minutes) with colleagues to select a winner. This is a great way to consume science and network with SONS colleagues.

Do you have any ideas for SONS involvement in educational efforts? Dr Martin can be reached at jmartin03@connecticutchildrens.org

Election for open position, SONS executive committee

Three individuals have received nominations for the anticipated opening on the SONS executive committee in November of 2021. The election will be held from March 1-31. Members will be notified of the election by email. Given the events of 2020, I’m sure that members recognize the importance of participation in all elections, including this one. Make sure your voice is heard! Please review statements from the candidates below:

Dr. Katrina Ducis

Neurosurgery is interesting. Pediatric neurosurgery is fascinating! I discovered this at the University of Vermont during residency and it has only been solidified during my fellowship and first year or so as an attending at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University. I am also in the process of transitioning back to the University of Vermont.

My goals over the coming years are to share the knowledge of conditions pediatric neurosurgeons can treat amongst my pediatric colleagues as well as my enthusiasm of how fascinating pediatric neurosurgery patients are! While most of this will be a boots on the ground effort, having the support and involvement of the AAP SONS will be critical.

Recently, I have been involved with writing a manuscript on the variation in care of premature IVH patients and initial NICU management. While I feel pediatric neurosurgery has homogeneity due to the HCRN (Hydrocephalus Clinical Research Network), we clearly have not shared this with our neonatology colleagues. If there is a lack of communication under the roof of the same hospital, it is certain there is ambiguity in caring for nearly all other pediatric neurosurgical conditions.

With the above in mind, my primary goals for the AAP SONS executive committee membership would be creation, and more importantly distribution, of joint recommendations for commonly identified and treated conditions of pediatricians and pediatric neurosurgeons to allow for improved efficiency and outcomes.

Dr. Greg Olavaria

I always wanted to be a pediatric specialist, even at a very young age. I admired my pediatrician who seemed to have magical powers of diagnosis, and he was able to help his patients live long and healthy lives. My interest in neurosurgery came much later in medical school, where the complexity of the brain and it's mysteries intrigued me.

A leadership position with the AAP SONS EC would allow me to focus on the education of pediatricians and collaborate with them. I recently co-edited the 16 chapter Pediatric Neurosurgery for the Primary Care Provider, in the Pediatric Clinics of North America (with Jonathan Martin) to be published later this year. It truly covers the gamut of common neurosurgical conditions the primary care provider is likely to face in day-to-day practice.

We need to connect our subspecialty with average pediatricians in a meaningful way, and my predecessors in SONS have

Continued on Page 9
paved the way for this. We should participate in Webinars, Podcasts, printed material (AAP News), and national meetings with topics pertinent to office-based practice and the care of hospitalized children. Our literature is constantly updating the existing knowledge on pediatric neurosurgical care, and we should share these developments. We should engage the PROS (Pediatric Office-based Research) research group and develop guidelines for referrals to our subspecialty. Delays in referral and unnecessary testing (use of CT) can be avoided by focused education initiatives. I want to contribute to planning a session of the Pediatric Neurosurgery Section Meeting sponsored by SONS which focuses on less scientific issues: safety, quality, prevention, chronic illness, transition, caregiver concerns, and other topics.

A long neglected area is the parent experience, especially of the chronically ill child. Just as important as a child's health is the mental well-being of the caregiver, and it would benefit all of us if we could utilize AAP resources to explore the physician-parent relationship more fully. I would also like to connect support organizations in neurosurgery, i.e. The Spina Bifida Association, Chiari and syringomyelia groups, the Hydrocephalus Association with existing AAP support groups.

Dr Seuss exclaimed, 'A person's a person, no matter how small.' I look forward to bringing my love of pediatrics and children's health to the SONS EC. I am just as passionate about pediatric advocacy and education as with the day-to-day practice of pediatric neurosurgery. Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Brandon Rocque

I am a pediatric neurosurgeon at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I believe that it is critical for pediatric neurosurgeons to address issues surrounding transition to adult care. Over the past several years, our center has worked on multiple fronts to provide transition readiness education for adolescents and families and to provide a welcoming adult care environment, focusing primarily on children with spina bifida.

More recently we have opened a transition primary care clinic for children with complex medical needs, including children with cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus. While the importance of adequate planning for transition to adult care is not unique to neurosurgeons, my goal is to leverage the strengths of various national organizations to provide awareness of the importance of transition to adult care and resources to improve transition of care for our patients.

To date, I have worked with the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgeons to publish a consensus, best-practices document for transition in our patients. In addition, I am working with the Medical Advisory Board of the Hydrocephalus Association (HA) in an effort to address the gaps in care that HA has identified. My goal as a member of the AAP SONS Executive Committee would be to bring the resources of the AAP to bear on neurosurgical transition as well.

The AAP is offering the “Harnessing the Power of Traditional and Social Media in Health Care Course” to those interested in learning about best practices for social media platforms, content curation, storytelling, blog writing, and more. Recordings of the live presentations will be available for six months after the conclusion of the course. The course will be held Feb. 20-21. Save with early registration here.

The resolution deadline for the Summer Leadership Meeting will be April 1, 2021. Please see the guidelines for submitting resolution and the 2021 resolution template.
Year in review: Top articles in Pediatrics

The editors of Pediatrics have selected the Top 10 articles that had the greatest impact on readers in 2020 as well as the Top 5 five articles on COVID-19 that contributed to the health care landscape.

Learn to Be More Media Savvy With AAP Course

The AAP is offering the “Harnessing the Power of Traditional and Social Media in Health Care Course” to those interested in learning about best practices for social media platforms, content curation, storytelling, blog writing, and more. Recordings of the live presentations will be available for six months after the conclusion of the course. The course will be held Feb. 20-21. Save with early registration here.

Corona Virus Updates

Please continue to visit this AAP webpage for critical updates on COVID-19, including this page for advocacy information.

AAP Section on Neurological Surgery Executive Committee

Chairperson: Andrew Jea, MD, FAAP

Ex-Officio: Phillip Aldana, MD, FAAP

Executive Committee Members:

Gregory Albert, MD, FAAP
David Bauer, MD, FAAP
Sandi Lam, MD, FAAP
Jonathan Martin, MD, FAAP

Jen Gorlewski, MHA  Manager, AAP Committees and Sections
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