The opioid crisis reaches across all ages, socioeconomic, and ethnic divides. The AAP’s 2019 Pediatrics for the 21st Century program took a comprehensive look at how pediatricians and pediatric specialists can provide optimal pain management after surgery, injury, and in other clinical situations, while minimizing side effects and complications of opioid use. The Section on Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, working collaboratively with the Committee on Drugs, the Committee on Substance Use and Prevention, the Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, the Section on Integrative Medicine, and the Section on Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine, presented an exciting and educational program exploring various aspects of the opioid crisis and its impact on patients and families. Almost 50 abstracts were presented on a wide variety of pain and analgesic related topics. The session kicked off with a welcome address from AAP President Dr. Kyle Yasuda and was moderated by Dr. Rita Agarwal. Much of the session was recorded, and the videos can be found on the AAPExperience YouTube channel.

Scores and opioids to wean babies off their in-utero exposure. He then went on to review a newer treatment modality pioneered at Yale using Eat Sleep Console (ESC). This new approach uses less medications, treats babies as babies and focuses on meeting the mothers where they are. It encourages mother/baby bonding. It is not an anti-medication treatment but a more personalized approach with better matching of baby’s functional needs with appropriate medications. Mom is Medicine! Treat the baby like a baby. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBk_JqZqAYM

Dr. Kevin Osterhoudt from the Poison Control Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and a Professor of Pediatrics, discussed “Toddlers and Up: Unintentional Exposure, Prevention and Treatment”. He started his talk describing a case of an unresponsive 3 year old child who arrived in their emergency department and went on to have respiratory and cardiac arrest. Developmentally, toddlers are notorious for exploring their world with their fingers and mouths. There has been a dramatic increase in toddler opioid poisonings in recent years. There is an increase in opioids in the home, both prescription and diverted medications. It is important to discuss appropriate dosing, storage and discarding of controlled substances. State prescription monitoring programs can be a vital tool in early identification. Naloxone in the home can save lives. As physicians the greatest thing we can do is to “be present”. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYgQWafVMy4

Dr. Lucien Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Minnesota, moved up the age spectrum to help the audience understand opioid use in the adolescent, declaring that “the biggest risk factor for developing opiate use disorder is having a human brain”. Dr. Gonzalez stresses that while most teenagers do not abuse opioids, all it takes is one exposure to lead to misuse in some. One of the risk factors for substance abuse is a diagnosis of anxiety and depression, and these children are often more likely to get opioids prescribed for medical problems than other children. He also emphasized the importance of not focusing just on opioids; other substances present an emerging problem as well, in particular amphetamines and cannabinoids. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF0pg3K29M&t=9sT

Dr. Gonzalez’s session was followed by a case presentation by Dr. Jason Reynolds, a pediatrician in private practice, who described the story of one of his patients. Dr. Reynolds is part of a group of pediatricians who are trying to increase access to medication assisted therapy (MAT) in children with opioid use disorder. Dr. Reynolds and his patient “Nate” were featured on the Today Show and his story can be found here. https://www.today.com/video/families-of-addicted-teens-are-turning-to-pediatricians-for-help-1067994179580. Nate is a now 19 with a history of anxiety, depression and polysubstance use who overdosed twice prior to finally getting effective treatment with buprenorphine along with psychiatric support.

Dr. Matthew Grossman, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital, started by describing the scope of neonatal abstinence syndrome. He gave the history of NAS and summarized traditional treatment approaches using Finnegan

Rita Agarwal MD, FAAP, FASA

Dr. Matthew Grossman

Kevin Osterhoudt

Matthew Grossman

Rafael Agarwal

Dr. Lucien Gonzalez

Dr Stephan Hays, a Clinical Professor of Anesthesia and Pediatrics at University of Iowa and an AAP SOA Executive Committee member, gave an excellent review of acute pain management, with an emphasis on the multi modal approach. He started by defining types of nerve fibers and receptors and
went on to discuss the various medications that can be used effectively for analgesia. He discussed prices and costs of different medications and finished by describing the difference between multimodal analgesics and multimodal analgesia. He stressed the importance of a multimodal approach to analgesia.

Dr. Anjana Kundu, Professor of Anesthesia and Pediatrics at Dayton Children’s Hospital and Past President of the Society for Pediatric Pain Medicine, defined and described chronic pain and how to differentiate it from acute pain. Chronic pain in children seems to be increasing. Emotional distress and functional disability as a result of chronic pain are increasing and these are associated with an increased incidence in chronic pain and mental health issues in adults. Dr. Kundu reviewed neuroanatomy and the current theories regarding pain centralization. She reviewed the importance of multidisciplinary therapy that includes physical therapy, occupational therapy, alternative and complementary treatment with an emphasis on functional recovery. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlq5XepO-EA

Dr. Melanie Brown, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota, concluded the 2019 Peds 21 session with a wonderful talk on The Mind Body Connection. She stressed that pain is often the tip of the iceberg and really all pain is in the brain. She focused on evidence-based approaches, while stressing the importance of supporting the child and family’s innate strengths in a collaborative manner with the healthcare team. Brains can be rewired by changing thoughts and changing habits. She concluded her talk by sharing a few simple techniques pediatricians can use in their practice to help empower children and families and to optimize management of distressing situations. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEaxYxOmwvl&t=57s

Video of the two Q&A sessions that took place during Peds 21 can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC67WbdJoA&t=44s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QulPNNf7Eis&t=39s

The 2019 Peds-21 session was a great success and marks a historic achievement for our Section.