

November 26, 2020

Dear fellow SONPM members,

As Thanksgiving dawns in Alaska, the day is already underway in Chicago—my new zip code. Today is a good day to reflect on the striking span of time zones, of geographies, of cultural settings, of professional pathways, of talents and interests of our varied fellow SONPM members who share a professional home here within the AAP. What a remarkable time 2020 has been. Aside from the pandemic, our Section has ramped up its activities and accomplishments impressively over the past couple of years. Mark Hudak catalogued some of the things we now have under our belts in a recent Periodic Update. I will highlight just a few.

The Perinatal COVID-19 Registry has now amassed data from over 4500 mother-infant dyads. The direct link to the infographic (which is updated every Friday) is <https://my.visme.co/view/ojq9qq8e-npc-19-registry>. This has been a remarkable, essentially real-time effort to understand how COVID-19 affects mothers and babies. This data has impacted the separation of babies from their mothers and allowed us to be supportive of essential human connections like breastfeeding. Look for what we have learned so far to be published in the near future. Thank you to Mark Hudak, Karen Puopolo, Jeffrey Horbar and Reese Clark for leading this collaborative effort—a joint project of the SONPM, VON and Mednax. It is not too late to join in this work. Please contact Mark Hudak for more details; there is also information on the website.

The Section has transformed the way we gather and learn together. Our Scottsdale Workshop on Perinatal Practice strategies was cancelled this March, as the pandemic ramped up initially, but look for a streamlined virtual program March 16-17th of 2021 (note that this has moved to a weekday slot). Kudos to the WPPS Planning Group (Krithika Lingappan, Dena Hubbard, Joshua Petrikin and Jose Perez) for adapting to the events of this year and for extending your terms to plan a transformed virtual conference in the Spring. The 2020 NCE—including our Neonatology “H Program”—was converted to an all virtual format in October. Notwithstanding some technical challenges, a robust agenda was planned and carried out by Clara Song and Jim Barry at the helm. We faced new challenges in promoting meaningful interactions with our online poster presenters, but the live sessions were lively and interactive, thanks to great speakers and superb moderators from our early and mid-career ranks. The format for the 2021 NCE (neonatology program to be led by Jim Barry and Mike Posencheg) is not yet determined but will likely include at least some virtual component. We miss the in-person fellowship but we learned much about virtual learning, and record numbers of attendees were able to participate without the need for travel. We hope to hold onto many of the benefits of this format while we look forward to getting together face-to-face as the pandemic wanes. Our fellows conferences and many regional conferences have also been converted to virtual to keep attendees safe in these unprecedented times, and we hope to share lessons learned and offer support for this transformation. Several of our special interest groups have planned and hosted successful webinar series (WiN-finances & women in leadership, MidCAN-leadership, Clinical Leaders-needs assessment, quality dashboards, advanced communication, change management) this year and we have put infrastructure supports in place to sustain these activities. We are also actively developing our skills in podcast production—thanks largely to TECAN, Ashley Lucke, John Zupancic and Shetal Shah as drivers for this.

Our website is being reshaped and honed under the effective new leadership of Krithika Lingappan. Thank you to all of the hard-working page editors, and to Linda Van Marter for setting the stage for the website overhaul as the AAP works to unify its digital presence. Please do let us know if there is something you would like to see on the website. Also, I would be seriously remiss if I did not mention the dynamic leadership of Clara Song in expanding our digital repertoire through her tweets, posts and leadership of media and communications efforts.

Advocacy is near and dear to me, and I am very proud that we have had a dozen or so neonatologists attend the Legislative Conference over the past few years. Unfortunately, LegCon was cancelled due to the pandemic this year, but SONPM is committed to supporting a few members to attend this inspiring conference each year. Section members have participated in Subspecialty Days of Action, and have called or written to their representatives about subspecialty loan repayment, newborn screening, medicaid work requirements, trainee visa requirements, donor milk coverage, and many other issues. The formal Advocacy Committee is taking shape and focuses on legislative actions, as well as internal advocacy issues—like the AAP Annual Leadership Forum (ALF) resolution process that directs the focus of our organization. The Section has only been submitting resolutions for three years, we have put forth a dozen, and all have passed, with two making it into the Top Ten. If you have ideas as to what the AAP should prioritize, please contact Shetal Shah or me (co-chairs for the Advocacy Committee). Consider attending LegCon and watch for announcements of SONPM scholarship opportunities. Keep an eye out for legislative alerts—expect templates for communications about the MOMS Act in the near future, along with tips on how to be an effective advocate in the presidential transition period.

Advocacy, like leadership, career development, wellness and other areas of passionate interest has sparked interest in multiple subgroups of our Section. We are responding to member interest in career phases, NICU follow-up, quality improvement, clinical leadership, global health and essentials like educational strategies and clinical excellence. I celebrate the enthusiasm and accomplishments of each of these groups, but we now want to capitalize on this momentum to move forward together as a Section. A major goal of 2021 will be to pull together and cross-link the efforts of our various SIGs on these themes to avoid duplications and promote synergy. We are working on website structure and communication strategies to connect and coordinate parallel efforts so members can navigate more efficiently to related activities. We will also embrace a new initiative to strengthen connections between regional neonatal organizations so we can foster collaboration and shared learning across the country.

One of the most significant gains for the Section related to the pandemic has been a new rhythm for the tireless work of the executive committee. Initially due to the need for a timely response to COVID-19, we have been meeting weekly in 2020. Each district is well-represented by engaged and hard working local neonatologists, elected by their district SONPM members. One of our major undertakings this year will be refreshing the Section strategic plan. The last iteration is posted on our website: <https://services.aap.org/en/community/aap-sections/sonpm/mission-goals-core-values-and-strategic-plan/>. I hope many of you had a chance to participate in the recent survey—these results will guide this work according to the values and priorities of our members. Please reach out to your representative if there is anything you feel the Section needs to address or prioritize. Here is the listing of our current District Representatives:

District I	Munish Gupta
District II	Shetal Shah
District III	Michael Posencheg
District IV	Brian Hackett
District V	Beena Sood
District VI	Josh Petrekin
District VII	Clara Song
District VIII	Jim Barry
District IX	Alexis Davis
District X	Ravi Patel

I wish you all a safe and meaningful holiday with creative ways to connect with those you love. Thank you to all who are working in the NICU this week. Thank you to all of our family members who make it possible to do our work in neonatology and who help provide the balance we need to keep our work sustainable. Thank you to the SONPM executive committee and the many other leaders who further the collective work of our community. Thank you for the creativity and nimbleness that will get us through this time together.

In closing, I'll share one of my favorite videos on thankfulness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpkEvBtyL7M>

Take care and be well!

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