

**President's Corner**  
**Russell S. Kirby, PhD, MS, FACE**

Our annual meeting was held literally in the shadows of Disneyland in mild and sunny Anaheim, California. Many took advantage of the setting to visit the theme park, sightsee around the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and even to visit the beaches. Our attendance was down slightly from the 2008 conference, but was within expectations on which the meeting budget was planned.

Pauline Mendola, now our current past-president, coordinated the scientific program with assistance from Courtney Lynch, member-at large. Jackie Brakey, our webmaster, played a pivotal role in our continuing transition to web-based abstract processing and review. As always, there were far more abstracts worthy of platform presentation than can be accommodated in the plenary sessions, and Pauline did an outstanding job fashioning sessions that extended the science and raised important theoretical, methodological and analytical issues.

The keynote presentation was provided by former SPER president Jon Tyson, entitled "Clinical Practice Amidst Uncertainty: Clinical Research, QI and Bayes Theorem". Jon did an excellent job of keeping participants engaged (not an easy task just before lunch time) and made us think about the clinical implications of our research findings with very specific, practical examples.

During the meeting, the first SPER Awards were given, as were the student prize and international travel awards. See the articles on pages 3 and 4 for more details on these awards and the 2009 recipients.

The annual business meeting included a lively discussion about the SPER dues structure for 2010. The membership elected to increase the annual dues to offset several years of increase in journal subscription fees, while remaining true to our commitment to facilitate participation in SPER by student members. A number of recognition awards were made to outgoing executive committee members, and the newly elected members were recognized and welcomed into their roles. A special recognition was made to Enrique Schisterman, for his unceasing dedication to the student training workshops he has planned and facilitated prior to our annual meetings for several years.

Danelle Lobdell provided the Treasurers Report. The SPER coffers are in good shape, though our membership numbers have been declining somewhat in the past few years. Two conference grants, from NICHD and the March of Dimes Foundation, were essential to the financial success of the 2009 meeting. The NICHD conference grant can be renewed for several years, and we will apply for another grant for 2010 from the March of Dimes Foundation.

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Any member who has ideas about other sources of funding, or ways to increase our membership, should contact an executive committee member with your suggestions. During the 2009-10 year, the executive committee will also explore establishment of a fund or endowment to support SPER for the future.

Feedback concerning the abstract submission process and online abstract review was largely favorable, but would value your comments on how to improve these processes for 2010. We will also explore putting the student prize paper and Berendes international travel award applications online.

Cande Ananth reported on the status of PPE. Members who have ideas (and potential funding) for supplements should contact the editors. The editorial process continues to move fairly smoothly, but more of us need to step up and assist in the reviewing process when called upon.

In 2011, the next Congress of Epidemiology will be held in Montreal. SPER is participating in the planning process, and encourages members with ideas for special sessions to bring these forward. There are also some volunteer opportunities relating to conference planning and activities during the Congress if anyone is interested in participating.

Pauline Mendola's shoes as president will be very hard to fill, but so far we are off to an excellent start. Your executive committee meets regularly, and the officers meet by conference call every other week to keep everyone focused on issues that require timely resolution. This is a wonderful group of colleagues, and I am honored to have the opportunity to work each of them. As always, if you have ideas for new activities or ways to improve SPER, please let me know! I'm looking forward to another great year!

## 2009-2010 SPER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### **President:**

Russell Kirby, PhD  
USF College of Public Health

### **Past President:**

Pauline Mendola, PhD  
National Center for Health Statistics

### **President Elect:**

Cande Ananth, PhD, MPH  
UMDNJ - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

### **Secretary (2007-2010):**

Marcia Feldkamp, PhD, PA, MSPH  
University of Utah Health Sciences Center

### **Treasurer (2008-2011):**

Danelle Lobdell, PhD  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

### **Member-at-Large (2006-2010):**

Courtney Lynch, PhD, MPH  
The Ohio State University

### **Member-at-Large (2007-2011):**

Suzan Carmichael, PhD  
March of Dimes California Research Division  
Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute

### **Member-at-Large (2008-2012):**

Penelope Howards, PhD  
Emory University

### **Member-at-Large (2009-2013):**

Anjel Vahratian, PhD, MPH  
University of Michigan

### **Student Representative (2009-2010):**

Mahsa Yazdy  
Boston University

## Highlights from the 2009 SPER Annual Meeting in Anaheim

### 2009 SPER Student Prize Paper Winner

Mahsa Yazdy from Slone Epidemiology Center at Boston University was the 2009 recipient of the SPER Student Prize Paper. Her oral presentation, entitled “Maternal dietary glyceemic intake and the risk of neural tube defects,” presented findings from a case-control study of non-diabetic mothers of 698 NTD cases and 696 non-malformed controls. Interviews conducted within six months of delivery were performed to ascertain dietary intake.

Mahsa found that after adjustment for sociodemographic and other dietary factors, the OR for high glyceemic index was 1.5 (1.1-2.0) and for glyceemic load it was 1.8 (0.8, 4.0). The presentation was well received and we look forward to the publication of these interesting findings.



The keynote presentation was provided by former SPER president Jon Tyson, entitled “Clinical Practice Amidst Uncertainty: Clinical Research, QI and Bayes’ Theorem”.

### 2009 SPER Advanced Methodology Workshop

This year's Advanced Methods Workshop was a great success. It was held on June 22, 2009 prior to the SPER opening reception. The workshop was organized by the 2008•2009 SPER Student Representatives Amy Branum and Andrea Deierlein along with Dr. Enrique Schisterman.

The workshop featured presentations from two distinguished methodologist and their students. Dr. Sander Greenland of UCLA School of Public Health and his student Ari Lipsky presented on extending Bayesian methods for use in epidemiologic research. Dr. Stephen Cole from UNC Chapel Hill presented on marginal structural models and his student Daniel Westreich stepped through an example using the models.

There were 74 attendees who participated in the workshop this year and included a mix of students, researchers and senior investigators. The program for the workshop can be found online at <http://www.sper.org/FinalProgram-2009.pdf>.

### SPER Quick Facts

- 170 members attended the 2009 SPER Annual Meeting in Anaheim, CA.
- The 2010 SPER Annual Meeting will be held on June 22-23, 2010 at the Westin Hotel in Seattle, WA.
- The 2011 SPER Annual Meeting will be held on June 20-21, 2011 at the Sheraton Hotel in Montreal, QC.

### **2009 SPER Heinz Berendes International Travel Award Winner**

Monique Robinson, a PhD candidate at the Telethon Institute for Health Research in Western Australia, was the 2009 recipient of the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award. Her oral presentation, entitled “Smoking cessation in pregnancy reduces the risk of child behavioral problems: A longitudinal prospective cohort study,” utilized data from the Western Australia Pregnancy Cohort Study and followed 2,900 women and children during pregnancy and at 2, 5, 8, 10, and 14 years post-delivery.

Monique found that the maternal decision not to quit smoking, or the inability to quit smoking during pregnancy appears to be a particularly strong marker for poor behavioral outcomes in children. The presentation was well received and we look forward to the publication of these interesting findings.



2009 Heinz Berendes International Travel Award Winner Monique Robinson and SPER President-Elect Russell Kirby.

### **2009 SPER Rising Star Award**

Emily Oken, MD, MPH  
Harvard Medical School

### **2009 SPER Mentoring Award**

Michael Kramer, MD  
Scientific Director, Institute of Human Development, Child, and Youth Health,  
Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
Professor of Pediatrics, Epidemiology, and Biostatistics, McGill University



Above: (L to R) SPER President-Elect Russell Kirby, 2009 SPER Mentoring Award Recipient Michael Kramer, and Robert Platt

Right: 2009 SPER Rising Star Emily Oken and SPER President-Elect Russell Kirby



## NIH Loan Repayment Programs – Deadline December 1, 2009

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) repays outstanding student loans through its extramural Loan Repayment Programs (LRPs). The LRPs target researchers who are or will be conducting nonprofit biomedical or behavioral research, and the application cycle opens September 1. The five extramural LRPs are Clinical Research, Pediatric Research, Health Disparities Research, Contraception and Infertility Research, and Clinical Research for Individuals from Disadvantaged Backgrounds. Applications will be accepted online until 8:00 p.m. Eastern time on December 1, 2009, at [www.lrp.nih.gov](http://www.lrp.nih.gov).

Please share this e-mail with researchers in your organization who may benefit from this career-enhancing opportunity. The December 1 deadline will approach quickly.

**BENEFITS:** New LRP contracts are awarded for a two-year period and repay up to \$35,000 of qualified educational debt annually. Tax offsets also are provided as an additional benefit. Participants may apply for competitive renewals, which are issued for one or two years. Undergraduate, graduate, medical school, and other health professional school loans qualify for repayment. An NIH grant or other NIH funding is not required to apply for or participate in the LRPs.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Applicants must possess a doctoral-level degree (with the exception of the Contraception and Infertility Research LRP); be a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident; devote 20 hours or more per week to conducting qualified research funded by a university, nonprofit organization, or federal, state, or local government entity; and have qualified educational loan debt equal to or exceeding 20 percent of their institutional base salary.

**AWARDS:** Each year, some 1,600 research scientists benefit from the more than \$70 million NIH invests in their careers through the extramural LRPs. Twenty-six percent of awards are made to individuals within one to five years of receiving their doctoral degree. More than 75 percent of awards go to individuals within 10 years of receiving their doctoral degree. Approximately 40 percent of new applications and 70 percent of renewal applications are funded.

**QUESTIONS?** Visit the LRP website at [www.lrp.nih.gov](http://www.lrp.nih.gov) for more information and to access the online application. For additional assistance, call or e-mail the LRP Information Center at (866) 849-4047 or [lrp@nih.gov](mailto:lrp@nih.gov).

## 2010 SPER Annual Meeting Deadlines to Remember

Call for Abstracts:	February 6, 2010 at 5:00pm (local time)
Student Prize Paper:	March 6, 2010
Heinz Berendes International Travel Award:	March 6, 2010

## **Reviewers for NIH Study Section Needed**

We have been asked again by the NIH Center for Scientific Reviews to submit names from our membership that could serve as reviewers on NIH Study Section Grants. We are asking you to consider volunteering. The SPER executive board believes this is an important opportunity for our senior scientists. The number of reviewers in the study sections with expertise in reproductive/perinatal/pediatric epidemiology is not high.

The NIH criteria are straightforward. They seek reviewers who are experienced senior scientists, have received major peer-reviewed research support either from NIH or an equivalent agency, understand the grant review process, and are willing to serve as study section members.

If you qualify and are willing to serve, please send the following information to Russell Kirby at [rkirby@health.usf.edu](mailto:rkirby@health.usf.edu), who will forward the list of possible reviewers to NIH for SPER.

Requested Information: name, institution, e-mail address, area of expertise, the most appropriate study section or Integrated Review Group, if known, and recent funding sources.

## **SPER Membership Renewal Time**

It is time to renew your SPER membership. SPER membership runs from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010. Renewing by December 1, 2009 will avoid interruption in membership benefits.

Register on-line at:  
<http://www.sper.org/memberform.php>

## **SPER is now on Facebook!**

Become a fan of the Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Society-for-Pediatric-and-Perinatal-Epidemiologic-Research/135879141953>