



OCTOBER 2005

SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND PERINATAL EPIDEMIOLOGIC RESEARCH

President's Corner

Mary L. Hediger, PhD

I don't know about the rest of you, but as there is more and more focus by adult-disease epidemiologists and clinical scientists on the pre-conceptional, fetal, perinatal, and pediatric origins of their outcomes, I'm feeling pushed aside and taken over. Like dominoes falling backwards, pediatrics went first, the fetal and perinatal fields are falling fast, and reproductive issues must be next. So much for nuance; birth weight, long one of our main outcomes, is just another risk factor. Should we be revolting?

In many ways, we already are.

Step one, go after the young. As a result of the efforts of a number of SPER Past Presidents, the NICHD announced in late June, 2005 that they were prepared to accept more applications for departments to develop institutional pre-doctoral training programs in reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology (PAR-05-130), and, first off the mark, Michigan State University has formally started their NICHD-funded training program in perinatal epidemiology. The First Annual NICHD-IHDCYH Summer Institute in Reproductive and Perinatal Epidemiology, held at Woods Hole (Cape Cod), was a success, gathering together an impressive international group of twenty students for a week of training. SPER has embraced with enthusiasm the 2006 Epidemiology Congress

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Highlights from the 18th Annual SPER Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The annual SPER meeting, with an international group of pediatric and perinatal colleagues, was held in beautiful Toronto this past June. Dr. David A. Savitz, outgoing SPER president, opened the meeting which included plenary sessions focused on the role of stress, biomarkers and preterm birth and research regarding placental disorders using the Danish Birth cohort, as well as other national ecologic and histologic studies.

Anisio Veloso Pais e Melo Junior (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award winner, discussed "The Impact of Kangaroo Mother Care on Neonatal Mortality in Brazil". Erika W. Hagen (University of Wisconsin), winner of the SPER Student Prize Paper,



presented the results of her study assessing the influence of very low birthweight (VLBW) on school achievement. These data suggested that while all VLBW children had lower scores on standardized

math tests, compared with population controls, there was a larger deficit for VLBW children born after the introduction of surfactant relative to those VLBW children born before surfactant. The mechanism could not be determined from these data but may have related to differential neonatal survival and/or exposure to postnatal steroids.

The 2005 Keynote Address was given by Dr. Duane Alexander, Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, outlining the needs and opportunities in pediatric and perinatal epidemiologic research including a description of funding opportunities and the goals of the National Children's Study.



2006 SPER Abstract Submission Deadline: February 11, 2006

On-line submission of abstracts for consideration in the 2006 Annual Meeting will be due February 11, 2006. Details regarding the abstract submission guidelines will be posted on the SPER website (www.sper.org) by November. There will also be no abstract submission fee this year!

Upcoming 19th Annual SPER Meeting: Seattle, Washington June 20-21, 2006

Our 2006 Annual Meeting will take place June 20-21st at the Westin Seattle Hotel, Seattle, Washington. We hope to have record participation and attendance at this meeting, particularly among new members and students. In fact, for this coming year (2006) we have reduced the student membership fee to \$20 in order to attract new, budding epidemiologists, and have recently appointed Brian W. Whitcomb, a graduate epidemiology student at the University of Maryland and NICHD as the new student representative to the SPER Executive Committee and Sara E. Simonsen, from the University of Utah, will serve as the newly created SER-SPER student liaison. We encourage students to join, and present their findings, at the annual conferences – a good way to network and share ideas with fellow SPER members! Please direct membership questions Lucy England (lbe9@cdc.gov) or her assistant Shin Kim (skim1@cdc.gov).

Heinz Berendes International Travel Award : Applications due March 10, 2006

As in past years, the SPER is requesting papers for consideration for the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award. Papers should represent work in reproductive, perinatal, or pediatric epidemiology, and research that concerns populations in developing countries is encouraged. To be eligible for this award, the applicant must not currently reside in the United States or Canada as a student, exchange scholar, or permanent resident. The winner will be given the award at the 2006 meeting in Seattle, Washington.

An award of \$250 plus expenses for travel, 2 days' lodging, and SPER meeting registration will be given to the author of the paper selected by the International Travel Award Committee. The paper must be unpublished at the time of the meeting. Authors do not have to be SPER members to apply for the award.

Applicants are also encouraged to submit their papers as abstracts, following the standard abstract

submission guidelines (available at www.sper.org) and the February 11th submission deadline. Abstracts of all accepted papers will be available on the web and printed in the book of abstracts distributed at the meeting. Applicants will be notified of the selection committee's decision by **April 7th**.

TO APPLY FOR THIS AWARD, PLEASE SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS:

- Manuscript: submit by mail four copies of the paper, which must be prepared according to the "Instructions to Authors" printed in the journal *Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, and email an electronic version
- A cover letter that provides the name and address of your academic affiliation or research establishment and your country of residence in the previous six months

PAPERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 10, 2006.

SEND PAPERS TO:

SPER Past President:

David A. Savitz, PhD

[Please check the SPER website for new address and email after January 1, 2006]

**Student Prize Paper Award :
Applications due March 10, 2006**

SPER is also requesting papers for the Annual Student Prize Paper Award. This competition is open to graduate and medical students, postdoctoral fellows, medical residents, research trainees, and clinical fellows interested in reproductive, perinatal, and pediatric epidemiology. The winner of the award will present the selected paper at the 2006 meeting in Seattle, Washington.

An award of \$250 plus expenses for travel, two days' lodging, and SPER meeting registration will be given to the author of the selected paper. The paper should represent work in reproductive, perinatal, or pediatric epidemiology conducted as a student or trainee during the two years prior to the 2006 meeting. The paper

must be written by the student/trainee and must be unpublished at the time of the meeting. The author may submit the paper simultaneously to the Abraham Lilienfeld Student Prize Paper competition of the Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER); however, if the paper is selected for that award, it will not be eligible for the SPER award. Authors do not have to be members of SPER to apply.

Students are also encouraged to submit their papers as abstracts, following the standard abstract submission guidelines (available at www.sper.org) and the February 11th submission deadline. Abstracts of all accepted papers will be available on the web and printed in the book of abstracts distributed at the meeting. Applicants will be notified of the selection committee's decision by **April 7th**.

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- Manuscript: submit by mail four copies of the paper, which must be prepared according to the "Instructions to Authors" printed in the journal *Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, and email an electronic version
- Include the following information on a removable face page: your name, telephone number, address, current position, a statement indicating when the work was completed, the name of your Department Chair (or Division Chief, etc.), and the name of the person under whose supervision the work was done
- A letter from the person under whose supervision the work was done, indicating your specific contribution

PAPERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 10, 2006.

SEND PAPERS TO:

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**Congress of Epidemiology Conference:
June 21-24, 2006 Seattle, Washington**

SAVE THE DATE. The Second North American Congress of Epidemiology will be held in Seattle, Washington on June 21-24, 2006, immediately following SPER. For more information on the Congress, go to www.epicongress2006.org, or the information can be accessed through the SER website (www.epiresearch.org). Jointly with the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Epidemiology and with generous funding by Novartis Pharmaceuticals, SPER will be sponsoring a symposium on "Insights from the Epidemiology of Asthma: Population-Based Approaches to Prevention of the Disease."

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aims of encouraging and increasing student participation by appointing a student representative to our Executive Committee specifically for outreach and recruitment, adding a liaison with the SER Student Caucus, lowering our membership fee for this year to a ridiculously small amount (\$20), and waiving the SPER registration fee for all students who register early. And, we're planning more.

Step two, promote ourselves and communicate. SPER members were again prominent last year (2004) in gathering top MCH Epidemiology Awards and this year (2005) in hosting major conferences and workshops (e.g., Successive Pregnancy Outcomes). We will continue to announce conferences, meetings, and awards in our newsletter (please send them in) and on our website (and add a jobs and fellowships listing), but to enhance our ability to communicate, we are also working to clean up the old and reformulate a new moderated listserv that will be automatically available to all SPER members and prior subscribers and that should provide a forum for discussion, as well as a mechanism for distributing information or notifying subscribers when new announcements are available on our website.

Step three, don't consider our breadth a weakness. We recognize that SPER is constantly competing with

other academic epidemiological, clinical, or disease-oriented societies for membership. We reflect more the ebb and flow of active members' interests than any academic or research area. If the meetings seem unbalanced in terms of topics, the only way that will change is for those with different interests to submit their best work to SPER, encourage their colleagues to submit, and volunteer to rank abstracts. I will try hard this year to develop a platform program to expose us to the best of all specialties within our field, but we need good material from which to choose.

I am looking forward to a great year for SPER. Contact any of us if you have ideas or suggestions for making SPER better.

SPER OFFICIALS

2005-2006

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