

SPER 25th Anniversary President's Corner: Enrique Schisterman

As we gear up for the 25th anniversary meeting, we recognize the profound accomplishments and important discoveries in our field and also use the occasion to take stock of our maturity and growth as a professional society. This review has prompted us to obtain insurance coverage for our board members, putting us on par with other big societies out there. Kudos to Courtney Lynch for taking the lead and pointing our society in the right direction.

Now sue me 😊

The executive committee and the 25th anniversary committee have been working tirelessly these past couple of months, and the program for this special meeting is starting to shape up. We've added four roundtables each morning to the program, offering an opportunity to partake in insightful and enlightening discussions, and get the day started off right! This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Alan Guttmacher, director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. There will be seven plenary session keynote speakers throughout the two and a half day meeting and a lively discussion panel on the last day to wrap things up. Germaine Buck Louis will be giving a talk on the history of SPER to kick off the gala, and we are in the process of organizing what promises to be a truly fun night!

Continued on page 2

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY!

2012 SPER Annual Meeting
June 25-27, 2012
Hyatt Regency Minneapolis
Minneapolis, MN

Check out the preliminary
program online at:

<http://sper.org/meeting/index.html>

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: 2012 SPER Annual Meeting Deadlines of Interest

Note: The deadline for all submissions is 5:00pm PT on the scheduled day

SPER Annual Meeting abstracts:	Friday February 10, 2012
Heinz Berendes International Travel Award:	Friday March 2, 2012
Student Prize Paper Award:	Friday March 2, 2012
Rising Star Award:	Friday March 2, 2012
Mentoring Award:	Friday March 2, 2012

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...Continued from Page 1

As in years past, we are continuing the tradition of bestowing awards to recognize outstanding achievement in the field of reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology. This year's submission deadline for the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award, Student Prize Paper Award, Rising Star Award, and Mentoring Award are all due on March 2, 2012. We are also seeking abstracts for consideration for presentation at the 2012 SPER 25th anniversary meeting! Abstracts must be submitted electronically by 5:00pm Pacific Time, February 10, 2012. Please see our newly updated website, <http://www.sper.org> for more details!

Lastly, I want to wish everybody a wonderful 2012, full of discoveries, funding, and health. Remember, bring a friend to SPER, we want to make this meeting as memorable as the past 24.

2012 Annual Meeting 25 Years of SPER: A Lifetime of Research through the Life Course

Call for Abstracts

The Society is soliciting contributed posters and talks for the 25th Annual Meeting that will take place from June 25-27, 2012 in Minneapolis, MN. This year's two and a half day meeting is different from years past! It includes eight plenary sessions led by eminent scientists, intriguing debates confronting the complex issues of reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology, several round-table discussions, and endless opportunities to participate in engaging discussions and exchange of ideas. SPER invites investigators to take full advantage of this exciting opportunity by submitting their recent work. Though this is a broad-based call for abstracts, investigators will be asked to identify the 25th anniversary meeting focus areas in which their work will fit best. The special emphasis areas include: gynecologic disorders, fertility and fecundity, gravid health, pregnancy outcomes, child development and behavior, the Exposome and research methods. These topics are further described in the preliminary program, which can be found at <http://www.sper.org/meeting/index.html>.

Authors do not have to be a member of SPER to submit an abstract, but if the submitted abstract is accepted, the presenter must join SPER in order to present at the meeting. The work may not have been previously published or presented elsewhere at the time of the meeting. Abstracts may be submitted electronically beginning November 1, 2011 at <http://www.sper.org/abstracts/>. The deadline for abstract submissions is **5:00 PM PT, February 10, 2012**.

2012 SPER Pre-Meeting Workshop Preview

We are pleased to offer **two workshops** immediately preceding the SPER 25th Anniversary Annual Meeting. When you register for the annual meeting, don't forget to also register for a workshop!

Advanced Methods Workshop

- Instrumental Variables: Maria Glymour (Harvard University)
- "Absolute Epidemiology: Developing Software Skills for Estimation of Absolute Contrasts from Regression Models in Perinatal Epidemiology": Jay Kaufman (McGill University) and Ashley Schempf (HRSA)

Want to learn about instrumental variables and additive models and how they can be used in your research? Who wouldn't? Let our distinguished speakers guide you through explanations and practical applications of these methods.

NEW for 2012! Perinatal Epidemiology for Clinicians

Olga Basso (McGill University) and Allen Wilcox (NIEHS)

This workshop will present an overview of research methods in perinatal epidemiology, including recent developments that may not be familiar to clinical researchers. The aim of the workshop is to provide clinicians working in the area of reproductive and child health with concepts and principles that will facilitate critical thinking and appraisal of scientific manuscripts. Particular attention will be devoted to the heterogeneity of preterm birth and low birth weight, and the implications of this heterogeneity for clinical research. Basic knowledge of epidemiology is advisable but not required.

News from the SPER Executive Committee:

The SPER Executive Committee is currently drafting **three resolutions** to be reviewed by the membership and voted on at the June 2012 business meeting that will take place at the conclusion of the 25th Anniversary Meeting in Minneapolis, MN.

The topics of the three resolutions include:

- 1.) Conflict of Interest Policy
- 2.) Whistle Blower Policy
- 3.) Record Retention Policy.

Look for these resolutions to be emailed to you sometime in April for review and be prepared to vote for them at the June 2012 business meeting.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: SPER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Nominations are being sought for President (2012-2015), one Member-at-Large (2012-2016), and the SPER Student Representative (2012-2013). All terms will begin at the close of the June 2012 Annual Meeting. Members of SPER may nominate themselves or any other member of SPER.

The President will serve as President-Elect (2012-2013), President (2013-2014) and Past President (2014-2015). The main duties of the President-Elect are to help the President develop plans for the annual meeting and to chair the selection of the Student Prize Paper Award recipient; the President designs the program for the annual meeting and is in charge of Executive Committee decision-making; and the Past President chairs the selection of the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award recipient and provides input as needed.

The Member-at-Large participates in all Executive Committee activities. The unique task assigned to the Member-at-Large elected this cycle is the coordination of abstract reviews for the SPER annual meeting (organize and coordinate the review process and assist with production of the program book). This member will replace Penny Howards.

The Student Representative participates in Executive Committee meetings, encourages and facilitates student participation in SPER and works on the Advanced Methods Workshop, which precedes the annual meeting.

This call for nominations will be posted on the SPER web-site. Nominations are due by February 13, 2012 and should be sent to Brian Whitcomb, Member-at-Large, at bwhitcomb@schoolph.umass.edu. You can also contact him for more information at (413) 577-7440. The slate of candidates and ballot will be presented to the membership for elections by email in March 2012.

News from the SPER Treasurer:

With the new SPER website comes a new way to register for membership through the new "Members Only" section. Members who registered in 2011 should have received an email on November 30 which provided a member ID for access to the members only section as well as a temporary password.

If you have not yet registered, membership registration for 2012 is still open. Please contact SPER Treasurer, Danelle Lobdell, at membership@sper.org if you did not receive your member ID or have any questions.

2012 SPER Student Prize Paper Award

The Society requests manuscript submissions for consideration 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 2012 SPER Annual Meeting.

An award of \$500 plus expenses for travel, 3 days lodging, and 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 upcoming meeting. The paper must be written by the student/trainee and must be unpublished at the time of the meeting. The submitted manuscript should be prepared according to the Author Guidelines in the journal *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*.

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 SPER members to apply for the award but are asked to join SPER if selected for presentation.

Please note: Applicants must also submit the abstract of their paper via the regular annual meeting call for abstracts to ensure consideration for the program should their manuscript not be selected for the award. To be eligible for student status at the meeting, individuals must be students, trainees or fellows at an academic or research institution at the time of the SPER annual meeting. Documentation of student or trainee status is required.

To apply for this award, please submit the following materials via our website www.sper.org by **Friday, March 2nd at 5pm Pacific Time:**

1. A cover letter indicating the name of the student or trainee, the title of the paper, academic affiliation and name of the mentor
2. Manuscript in PPE format
3. Letter of support from mentor under whom the work was completed indicating student or trainee's specific contribution

Evaluation of Applications:

Applications will be evaluated by a committee chaired by the SPER President-Elect. The committee will be composed of the SPER President-Elect, and 4 members of SPER chosen at the discretion of the SPER President-Elect. The paper will be evaluated according to 6 distinct criteria: originality, soundness of analytical methods, biological rationale, involvement of student in data collection, letter of support from mentor, and public health importance.

2012 Heinz Berendes International Travel Award

The Society requests submissions of manuscripts for the annual Heinz Berendes International Travel Award. The manuscript 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 **SHOULD HAVE COMPLETED THIS WORK OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES OR CANADA, AND SHOULD NOT HAVE RESIDED IN THE UNITED STATES OR CANADA.** The paper must be unpublished at the time of submission. Authors do not have to be SPER members to apply for the award but are asked to join SPER if selected for presentation. The winner will present the selected paper at the 2012 SPER Annual Meeting.

An award of \$250 plus expenses for travel, 3 days lodging, and meeting registration will be given to the author of the paper selected by the International Travel Award Committee. The submitted manuscript should be prepared according to the Author Guidelines in the journal Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology. You will also be asked to provide the name and address of your academic affiliation or research establishment and your country of residence in the previous six months.

Please note: Applicants must also submit the abstract of their paper via the regular annual meeting call for abstracts to ensure consideration for the program should their manuscript not be selected for the award.

To apply for this award, please submit the following materials via our website www.sper.org by **Friday, March 2nd at 5pm Pacific Time:**

1. A cover letter indicating the name of the applicant, title of the paper, academic affiliation or research establishment, and country of residence for the previous six months.
2. Manuscript in PPE format

Evaluation of Applications:

Applications will be evaluated by a committee chaired by the SPER Past-President. The committee will be composed of the SPER Past-President, and 4 members of SPER chosen at the discretion of the SPER Past-President. The paper will be evaluated according to 5 distinct criteria: originality, soundness of analytical methods, biological rationale, global impact, and public health importance.

2012 SPER Mentoring Award

This award is to recognize the importance of dedicated and skilled mentors in the development of reproductive, pediatric, and perinatal epidemiologists (RPPE) at all levels. The nominees will be evaluated based on proficiency in mentoring skills, dedication to mentoring, and attention to advisee development both technically, professionally, and personally in the field of RPPE epidemiology. Nominees should demonstrate effective people skills, motivate and inspire the mentee to excel, and should serve as a role model, teaching and demonstrating high standards of performance and integrity.

Eligibility: Individuals with an established career from academia, government, or the private sector are eligible. Candidates should be at the Associate Professor rank or above if in academia or at an equivalent senior rank in government agencies or industry. Nominees must be SPER members in good standing.

To apply for this award, please submit the following materials via our website www.sper.org by **Friday, March 2nd at 5pm Pacific Time:**

1. A letter of nomination from a SPER member
2. No more than two additional letters from persons who have been or currently are being mentored by the nominee (including but not limited to student advisees, junior faculty or staff)
3. The nominee's curriculum vitae

Evaluation of Applications:

Nominations will be evaluated by a committee chaired by the SPER President-Elect. The committee will be composed of the SPER President-Elect, and 4 members of SPER chosen at the discretion of the SPER President-Elect. Individuals will be evaluated according to 4 distinct criteria: evidence of mentee's success, letters of recommendation, contributions to the field as a mentor, and participation in SPER activities. There is an important distinction between academic standing and mentoring accomplishments. This award is intended to highlight individuals as mentors only. Nomination packages will be considered for 1 year after nomination and will be automatically re-evaluated as a candidate for the next selection of the Mentor Award. It is at the discretion of the nominator to update any relevant information.

2012 SPER Rising Star Award

This award is to recognize early to mid-career investigators whose achievements and potential set them on a trajectory to become research leaders in the field of reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology. We will consider their overall research contribution thus far, including publications, presentations, and influence on the field. We will also take into account their likely future role as their careers continue to evolve.

Eligibility: Early to mid-career investigators from academia, government, or the private sector are eligible. Candidates should be at the Assistant to Associate Professor rank if in academia (more advanced than post-doctoral fellow, but not at the full professor level) or an equivalent employment status if outside academia. The time since the highest degree should be no more than 7 years. Potential candidates may be nominated by any SPER member, however, the nominated individuals are responsible for submitting the Rising Star package outlined below.

To apply for this award, please submit the following materials via our website www.sper.org by **Friday, March 2nd at 5pm Pacific Time:**

1. A letter of nomination from a SPER member outlining specific achievements and career trajectory
2. Copies of the nominee's three most important publications
3. The nominee's curriculum vitae
4. Two letters of recommendation

Evaluation of Applications:

Nominations will be evaluated by a committee chaired by the SPER President-Elect. The committee will be composed of the SPER President-Elect, and 4 members of SPER chosen at the discretion of the SPER President-Elect. Individuals will be evaluated according to 4 distinct criteria: originality of the body of work supported only by the three papers submitted with the application, involvement in SPER activities, strength of letters of nomination and recommendation, evaluation of curriculum vitae (for evidence of outstanding accomplishment in a short period of time and a positive trajectory).

SPER Participation in the Joint Policy Committee of the Societies of Epidemiology

The Joint Policy Committee (JPC) of the Societies of Epidemiology (SE) is a consortium of 13 epidemiology societies, national & international in scope, organized to coordinate and unify joint policy actions among the societies of epidemiologists, globally. The JPC-SE serves as a forum in which concerns of a policy nature about any aspect of epidemiological research and practice can be discussed. Robert Platt and Russ Kirby are the current representatives of SPER on the JPC-SE.

In the summer and fall of 2011, the JPC-SE focused attention on proposed changes by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to regulations for protecting human subjects who participate in research. The goal of the changes to regulations is to better protect human subjects who are involved in research, while facilitating valuable research and reducing burden, delay, and ambiguity for investigators.

Several of the proposed rule changes had potential important negative consequences for epidemiologic research, including raising substantial difficulty for the conduct of research using administrative databases. Specifically, the rule changes could be interpreted as requiring informed consent for the secondary use of data collected for non-research purposes (e.g., claims data or other administrative data). The JPC-SE prepared and submitted a comment to HHS in response to these proposed changes. Drs. Kirby and Platt participated in the drafting of the document, and both signed as individuals and on behalf of SPER. Details of the changes, along with the JPC-SE's comment, can be found at

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=HHS-OPHS-2011-0005-0961>.

If you have additional content for the Spring 2012 newsletter, please send an email to Member-At-Large Anjel Vahratian at amv@med.umich.edu by March 15th.