



APRIL 2004

SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND PERINATAL EPIDEMIOLOGIC RESEARCH

President's Corner

Based on my review of the abstracts submitted this year, I anticipate that the 17th Annual Meeting of SPER will be extremely valuable for participants. The meeting will be held in Salt Lake City Utah, June 14-15. Over the years I have been impressed with the membership's depth of expertise about nutrition, and for that reason the opening session, moderated by Anna Maria Siega-Riz, will be a poster symposium related to the influence of growth and nutrition on pregnancy outcome. After audience viewing of the posters there will be a short platform presentation by each author, followed by a general discussion. Two plenary sessions will be focused on pregnancy outcomes, one on early life influences on childhood outcomes, and one on epidemiologic methods. Matthew Gillman will present the keynote speech titled "Developmental origins of obesity--epidemiologic challenges". A number of abstracts will be presented related to the role of innate immunity in disease pathogenesis, about which there is tremendous interest in the scientific community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their enthusiastic participation, over the past year, in the business of SPER. Clearly, the hardest working officer has been Anna Maria Siega-Riz, and I am sincerely grateful for all that she has done for SPER. I am also grateful to Cande Ananth for his meticulous oversight of the financial aspects of SPER. Russ Kirby has offered valuable advice throughout the year and once again, with the help of many SPER

members, has done an outstanding job of reviewing abstracts. David Savitz has demonstrated his exceptional leadership skills while exploring, with NICHD, the concept of funding training grants in reproductive epidemiology. In addition, David, Martha Werler, and Germaine Buck have worked with the Teratology Society in planning a jointly sponsored symposium on titled "Epidemiology of Miscarriage", to be presented on the Teratology Society meeting in Vancouver, June 26- July1, 2004. We are extremely fortunate to have David as the next president of SPER. Finally, the Executive Committee has developed an outstanding slate of candidates for SPER offices and I urge you to carefully consider the choices and vote.

I look forward to seeing you in Salt Lake City.

Mike O'Shea

Seventeenth Annual Meeting Salt Lake City, Utah

By now you have received the brochure for the 2004 Annual meeting that will take place June 14-15th at the Grand American Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. We hope that you will make time in your busy schedule to join us for this event. **Tell your fellow colleagues who may not be members to come.** The preliminary program for the meeting is on page 4 of the newsletter. We promise the reception will include good food, lots of cheer, and great discussions centered around the posters, of course. So come early and enjoy your fellow SPER members!

Narratives of Nominees
for SPER Executive Officers

President-Elect

Mary L. Hediger, PhD

Epidemiology Branch, Division of Epidemiology, Statistics and Prevention Research
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

I am a Human Biologist (Biological Anthropologist) by training who joined the DESPR Epidemiology Branch in 1997 to work on projects relating to human growth and development and nutrition. Prior to joining DESPR, I worked on a number of NIH-funded research projects on adolescent growth and cardiovascular disease risk factors in minority adolescents, adolescent pregnancy, and nutrition during pregnancy. I have had a wide variety of experience in epidemiology, having worked on small clinical studies, cohort studies, used national survey datasets, and vital statistics data in research. My current research interests include fetal, child and adolescent growth, perinatal epidemiology, and growth and nutrition. I have served on the Executive Committees of the Human Biology Association and the Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research (SPER), and currently serve as the Federal Co-chair of the Nutrition, Growth and Pubertal Development Working Group for the National Children's Study.

I have been an active member of SPER since its inception over fifteen years ago. I have authored close to 30 SPER presentations, reviewed abstracts, been responsible for the abstract review process and for editing the abstracts for publication or posting on the SPER website. I have always appreciated SPER meetings because they are small, uniquely collegial and an excellent opportunity to find out about new research. Although SPER has grown over the years, it is still primarily a "boutique" society, limited in scope but offering a generally higher quality epidemiologic product than its larger competitors (SER, SMFM, SPR). This is at once its greatest strength and weakness. The challenge for SPER is to continue to encourage students to specialize in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology and promote their careers in academics and/or public health and to continue to support the journal by submitting some of our best work. At the same time, we need to broaden our scope and exposure by drawing in more clinicians with interests in using epidemiologic methods for trials, benchmarking, risk adjustment, and performance management and in implementing recent findings in clinical applications. We would also benefit by drawing in more basic scientists (geneticists, physiologists, nutritionists, toxicologists) whose substantive findings in terms of

biomarkers or exposures should be tested using rigorous epidemiologic methods and designs.

Russell S. Kirby, PhD, MS

Professor and Vice Chair,
Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health
University of Alabama at Birmingham

My professional career since 1981 has been spent in the field of health research, becoming ever more focused in perinatal, pediatric, and maternal and child health epidemiology with the passing years. I have been a member of SPER since 1989, a regular attendee at our annual conferences since 1998, and a member of the executive committee from 2000-2004.

As president of SPER, I will strive to maintain the level of excellence exemplified in our annual conference and the journal, *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, while identifying opportunities to expand our membership and organizational roles for SPER. During my term on the executive committee of SPER, I have been actively engaged in this process, encouraging our involvement in the MCH epidemiology awards program and the sponsorship of the annual MCH epidemiology conferences together with a number of sister organizations. I will also work to foster interaction between the public health and academic/clinical sides of our field, on the national, state and local levels, and to develop opportunities for enhanced research training (including fellowships and postdoctoral programs, and advanced epidemiology/biostatistics methods) and leadership skills development for young professionals in our field.

Secretary

Adolfo Correa, MD, MPH, PhD

Epidemiologist
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

My training was at the University of California San Diego (M.D.), University of California San Francisco and San Francisco General Hospital (Pediatrics), and the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health (M.P.H., Ph.D., General Preventive Medicine), before I joined the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1987. I have been at National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, since 1998. My research interest have encompassed the role of medication use in Reye syndrome, effects of air pollutants on low birth weight and respiratory disorders in children, effects of parental exposures on

infertility and spontaneous abortions, birth defects and low birth weight, and morbidity and mortality of infants with birth defects.

As a member of SPER over the years, I have come to appreciate SPER's activities and accomplishments. The annual meeting of SPER is a unique and a valuable collegial forum for critical and stimulating debate on pediatric and perinatal epidemiologic issues. In this respect, SPER has played an important role in the professional development of its junior and less junior members, as well as in the growth of the discipline and the society. I would like to see the fostering of more exchange of insights into frameworks of disease causation with other scientific disciplines in an effort to not only gain a better understanding of the basis of pediatric and perinatal disorders but also to enhance the translation potential of our research findings into more meaningful public health education, interventions, and policies.

I appreciate and I am delighted to be invited to serve as a candidate for Secretary of the SPER and would welcome the opportunity and honor to work in defining future directions for SPER.

Dawn P. Misra, MHS, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education
University of Michigan

I received my MHS degree from the maternal and child health dept. at Hopkins in 1989. I continued on to Columbia, receiving my PhD in Epidemiology in 1993, focusing on perinatal health. I was a visiting asst. professor at City College New York and then a project director of an asthma research study in New York City. I returned to JHU in 1995 as an asst. professor in the maternal and child health dept (now population and family health sciences). I moved to the University of Michigan as an associate professor in the health behavior and health education department and last year was appointed director of the School of Public Health Interdepartmental Concentration in Reproductive and Women's Health. My work is primarily in perinatal epidemiology with a little policy work thrown in for fun. I have worked with a policy center to develop policy with sound scientific underpinnings. My own research focuses on social and biomedical factors which may influence perinatal outcomes and which may explain the increased risks of adverse outcomes experienced by poor and minority women. This includes examining the intersection between women's health prior to pregnancy and outcomes of pregnancy. This may encompass exposures from the perinatal and childhood periods of the woman's life. I have recently begun to develop work examining the interactions between genetic and social factors in the etiology of preterm birth.

I very much enjoy SPER meetings, particularly the formal as well as informal exchanges between members. I have always been impressed with how the organization welcomes students and treats them as equals. The SPER student prize paper contest helped motivate me (even though I lost!) to write the first paper from my thesis. If elected, I would advocate continuing to support student participation in our meetings and perhaps even expanding what we can do for students (e.g., workshop). I would also like to see our organization devote more meeting time to discussion of methods in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology. This might not lend itself to our current format. One idea might be to have 1 session as a workshop or round table in which there is discussion of a method and then papers demonstrating its application.

Member-At-Large

Jean M. Lawrence, ScD, MPH

Senior Research Scientist, Kaiser Permanente Southern California

After starting my career as a social worker working in neonatal intensive care and high risk obstetrics, I trained as an MCH epidemiologist at the University of Pittsburgh (MPH) and the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health (ScD) and completed post-doctoral training as member of the Epidemic Intelligence Service at the CDC. For the past 7 years, I have been employed by the Department of Research & Evaluation, Kaiser Permanente Southern California, as an epidemiologist and program evaluator. My research areas have included childhood diabetes (the SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth Study), the promotion of multivitamins to reduce the risk of NTDs, female pelvic floor disorders and pregnancy/delivery, neonatal group B streptococcal infections and a variety of other topics. I am a member of SPER, SER, APHA, and the ADA.

SPER provides a much needed forum for researchers in the areas of perinatal and pediatric epidemiology to come together to share research ideas and interests. I find this forum particularly important for researchers who are not a part of a large academic MCH or epidemiology department where there is a cadre of researchers working on similar topics. I would like to continue to see this organization provide a scientific forum for the presentation of innovative research and to encourage the participation of researchers at different stages of career development (masters and doctoral students, junior and senior level researchers). This may be facilitated by more actively recruiting student members from graduate training programs and encouraging non-members who attend the meeting to formally join the organization.

Jun (Jim) Zhang, MD, PhD

Investigator, Epidemiology Branch
National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

Dr. Zhang received the medical degree in China in 1988 and PhD in the U.S. in 1994. He is certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates. Before joining NICHD, NIH, he was an Assistant Professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. He is currently an Investigator with the Epidemiology Branch at NICHD. His research has covered a wide range of topics from contraception, risk factors for gynecological disorders, to obstetric and perinatal epidemiology. He has conducted observational studies as well as randomized clinical trials. His current research focus is on obstetric and perinatal epidemiology with particular emphasis on labor & delivery, preeclampsia and IUGR.

Reproductive, perinatal and pediatric epidemiology (RPPE) is a subspecialty within epidemiology. It bridges epidemiology, reproductive medicine, perinatology and pediatrics into a common area of study for solving pressing public health and clinical concerns. Although epidemiology is traditionally aligned with public health, its relevancy for clinical practice has evolved, especially with regard to RCTs and evidence-based medicine. RPPE is assuming a more prominent role in many clinical societies. I believe that epidemiologists should embrace this change in culture and help our clinical counterparts with empirical investigation. We should consider using our knowledge and skills to address pressing clinical issues. With the right attitude and good collaborations, epidemiologists can play an important role in advancing clinical medicine as well as furthering good public health practices.

How to Vote!!!!

Please send your electronic vote for President-elect, Secretary, and one Member-at-large to Anna Maria Siega-Riz, the SPER secretary at am_siegariz@unc.edu by May 21st. We will be sending out 2 reminders via email and one by regular snail mail if we do not hear from you as discussed in last year's business meeting. It would be nice if at least 50% of our membership voted!!!

Preliminary Program

Monday June 14, 2004

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| 3-7 PM | Registration |
| 5-6:30 PM | Reception & Nutrition Poster Symposium moderated by Anna Maria Siega-Riz |
| 6:30-8 PM | Poster Session I: Nutrition and Pregnancy Outcome |

Tuesday June 15, 2004

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| 8:00 - 8:15 AM | Welcome
Michael O'Shea, President |
| 8:15 - 10:00 | Plenary I - Pregnancy Outcomes I
Student Prize Paper-TBA |
| 10:00 - 10:30 | Morning Break |
| 10:30 - 11:45 | Plenary II - Pregnancy Outcomes II |
| 11:45 - 1:45 | Lunch and Poster Session II
Interventions, Multiple Gestation, Nutrition & Growth, Obstetrical Complications, and Social & Environmental Exposures |
| 1:45 - 2:30 | Keynote Address - Developmental origins of obesity--epidemiologic challenges by Matt Gillman |
| 2:30 - 3:15 | Plenary III- Early Life Influences on Childhood Outcomes |
| 3:15 - 3:45 | Afternoon Break |
| 3:45 - 4:45 | Plenary IV- Methods |
| 4:45 - 5:00 | Closure |
| 5:00 - 6:00 | Business Meeting |

A more detailed program and the abstracts are available on our web site www.sper.org