

President's Corner

Pauline Mendola, Ph.D.

Chicago was a wonderful setting for our 2008 meeting - easy to fly into from all around the globe (well, there are a lot of flights there anyway!) and the downtown hotel on the river was in comfortable walking distance to the "bean", great local restaurants, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

The scientific program was coordinated by Mary Croughan, our current past-president and Courtney Lynch, member-at-large. Fueled as always by the outstanding submissions of our active membership, the program was a great success with nearly 200 attendees. Of particular note was the thought-provoking keynote by Michelle Williams of the University of Washington on "The global challenge of gender-based violence: Physical and mental health consequences of violence against women". It's not often that the SPER audience is left speechless, but Michelle's stirring presentation did just that. She raised serious issues that no doubt hit home for many in the audience and called on us all to think about women's health and well being in a new way. It was one of the most moving keynote addresses I've ever heard and it sparked thoughtful responses and lots of discussion among the attendees. See the articles on page 3 and 4 for a description of the student prize and international travel award winners.

Our business meeting was rather sparsely attended but the discussion was lively. Maybe we should change the name to "business party" and then more of you would stay! ☺ Lots of interesting things to discuss after welcoming our new executive committee members and thanking the outgoing officers (see inset on page 3 for the composition of the committee for 2009).

The Treasurers Report given by Lucy England highlighted some areas of concern. Our meeting costs have been increasing substantially over the past couple of years and we have a very small cushion of funds left to keep us in the black. Several suggestions were discussed including raising the conference registration fees, further limiting the food at the meeting (this was cut back quite a bit in Chicago), and raising the fees for students (we currently charge a very nominal fee and cover about 80% of cost for students). The executive committee non-federal members are working to obtain conference support from NIH and possibly from the March of Dimes. All in all, a coordinated effort will be made this year to try and break even on the conference.

There were a few potential presenters in 2008 who submitted duplicate abstracts and/or a large number of closely related abstracts. We decided not to limit the number of first author abstracts for the meeting in 2009, but will remind everyone to avoid "updating" abstracts and the organizing committee will use discretion in developing the program.

The report from our editors at PPE was very encouraging. The impact factor has dipped a little which was expected after the effects of a particularly good year were phased out this time. Time from submission to author notification of decision have come down as well as the time to publication. If you are asked to review, please help out our editors and respond (they'd rather hear the "no" than not hear anything).

We have been making some progress in getting study sections to include reviewers with experience in perinatal epidemiology and Anna Maria Siega-Riz is coordinating a list of SPER members who could serve in that capacity.

We have a great exec committee working together to keep SPER strong. I'm looking forward to a great year!

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2008 SPER Annual Conference, held in Chicago, is a Huge Success!!



Dr. Michelle Williams, SPER 2008 Key Note Speaker and Dr. Mary Croughan, SPER President.

SPER in the Know:

- Congratulations to the 2008 SPER Student Prize Award Winner, *Nicole Jones*
- Congratulations to the 2008 Heinz Berendes Travel Award Winner, *Marijn Brouwers*
- The Upcoming 2009 SPER Annual Meeting will be held in Anaheim, CA June 22-23
- Check-out the pictures from the 2008 Annual Conference in Chicago on pages 3 and 4!

2008 SPER ADVANCED STUDENT METHODOLOGY WORKSHOP

This year's Advanced Methods Workshop, organized by Dr. Enrique Schisterman and the 2007-2008 SPER Student Representative Sunni Mumford, was held on June 23rd prior to the SPER opening reception and poster session.

The workshop was comprised of presentations from three distinguished speakers and their students. Dr. David Dunson of NIEHS presented on the use of Bayesian modeling techniques to estimate day-specific conception probabilities. Dr. Rich MacLehose, a post-doctoral fellow in the Biostatistics Branch at NIEHS presented examples of these techniques using data from a multi-center cohort study to estimate the effect of alcohol use on time to pregnancy. Dr. Jay Kaufman of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health gave a presentation on the use of smoothing techniques for variance estimation shrinkage in multilevel models. Elizabeth Torrone, a student at UNC-Chapel Hill, used New York City birth data to demonstrate the use of these techniques to estimate the effect of maternal education on low birthweight among infants of different Hispanic ethnicities.

Dr. K.S. Joseph of Dalhousie University presented the third session on causal and non-causal models in perinatal epidemiology. This session had a question and answer format which included a lively discussion with workshop attendees. Approximately 85 SPER participants attended the workshop and included a mix of students, junior researchers, and senior investigators.

The Workshop agenda and all presentation slides are available on the SPER website at : http://www.sper.org/Annual_Meeting.htm. We look forward to planning the 2009 Methods Workshop and hope to see you there!

2009 SPER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President:

Pauline Mendola, Ph.D.
National Center for Health Statistics

Past President:

Mary Croughan, Ph.D.
University of California at San Francisco

President Elect:

Russell Kirby, Ph.D.
USF College of Public Health

Secretary (2007-2009):

Marcia Feldkamp, PhD, P.A.
University of Utah Health Sciences Center

Treasurer (2008-2011):

Danelle Lobdell, Ph.D.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Member-at-Large (2005-2009):

Deborah Nelson, Ph.D.
Temple University

Member-at-Large (2006-2010):

Courtney Lynch, Ph.D., M.P.H.
The Ohio State University

Member-at-Large (2007-2011):

Suzan Carmichael, Ph.D.
March of Dimes California Research Division
Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute

Member-at-Large (2008-2012):

Penelope Howards, Ph.D.
Emory University

Student Representatives (2008-2009):

Amy Branum
Johns Hopkins University

Andrea Deierlein
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2008 Student Prize Winner

Nicole Jones from Michigan State University gave her prize winning presentation on "Combined maternal and neonatal gene polymorphisms and preterm birth". Her mentor, Claudia Holzman, is a former SPER Student Prize winner and the fine tradition of excellent training in perinatal epidemiology continues!

Nicole looked at functional polymorphisms in genes involved in innate immunity and found that when specific polymorphisms were shared by both mother and fetus, some unique susceptibilities to preterm birth emerged. The presentation was very well received and we all look forward to the publication of these interesting findings.

Congratulations to Nicole and to our honorable mention winners, Sarah Keim and Kristin Rankin. Thanks again to Danelle Lobdell, Mike O'Shea, Enrique Schisterman, Gary Shaw, and Michelle Williams for serving on the Student Prize Paper selection committee chaired by Pauline Mendola.

Nicole Jones, SPER 2008 Student Prize Winner and Dr. Pauline Mendola, SPER President-Elect.



Nicole Jones, SPER 2008 Student Prize Winner, Sarah A. Keim, student prize honorable mention, Dr. Pauline Mendola, SPER President-Elect, and Kristen M. Rankin, student prize honorable mention at the 2008 SPER Annual Meeting.

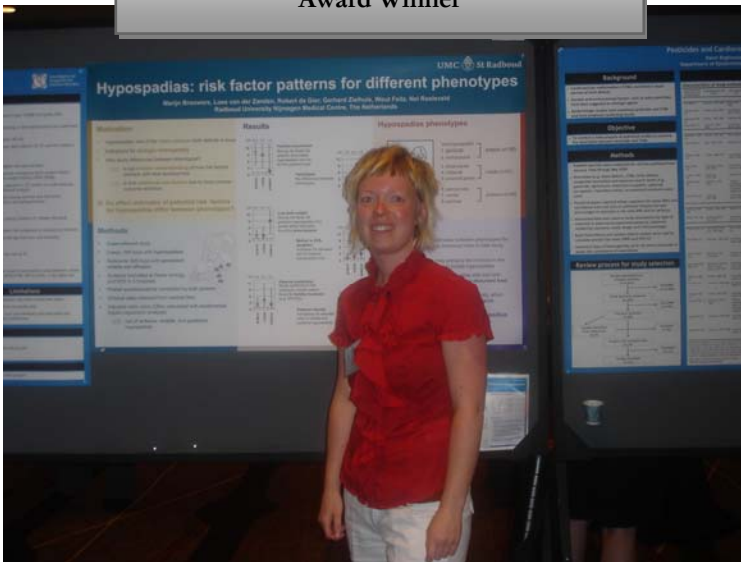
**2008
Heinz Berendes International
Travel Award Winner**

The annual Heinz Berendes award was given to Marijn Brouwers of the Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Health Technology Assessment in the Netherlands. Her work on “Hypospadias: Risk factors for different phenotypes” was presented in poster session A.

SPER is proud to encourage participation of researchers from outside the US and Canada by providing travel support with this prestigious award. It was a pleasure to have Dr. Brouwers join us in Chicago and we hope she'll be able to join us for other meetings in the future.

Thanks to Anna Maria Siega-Riz for coordinating the 2008 travel award.

Marijn Brouwers
2008 Heinz Berendes International Travel
Award Winner



**Applications for the 2009
Heinz Berendes
International Travel Award:**

The Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research (SPER) requests papers for the 2009 Heinz Berendes International Travel Award. The paper 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 present the selected paper at the 2009 meeting in Anaheim.

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 submission. Authors do not have to be SPER members to apply for the award.

Applicants should also submit the abstract of their paper in order to be considered for oral podium presentation, following the standard SPER abstract submission guidelines (available at our web site www.sper.org) and the March 6, 2009 submission deadline. If not accepted as a podium presentation, the winning paper will be automatically accepted for poster presentation. Abstracts of all accepted papers will be available on the web and printed in the book of abstracts distributed at the meeting.▪

Please submit the manuscript electronically only. The manuscript should be prepared according to the “Instructions to Authors” printed in the journal *Pædiatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* (available online at <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journals/ppe/>).

Please include 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 6, 2009. Please email papers to:

SPER Past President:
Mary Croughan, Ph.D.
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San Francisco, CA 94115
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The Coalition for Excellence in MCH Epidemiology

The Coalition for Excellence in MCH Epidemiology is a group of 16 organizations, including SPER that recognizes excellence by bestowing awards which are presented at the annual MCH Epidemiology meeting in December. The awards recognize individuals, teams, institutions and leaders of institutions for making significant contributions to improve the health of women, children and families.

The awards include:

The Greg Alexander Award for Advancing Knowledge- for advancing public health knowledge through epidemiology and applied research.

The Effective Practice Award for improving public health practice through effective use of data, epidemiology and applied research at the community, state, tribal or national level.

The Excellence in Teaching Award for improving MCH public health practice through excellence in teaching and training.

The Outstanding Leadership Award for enhancing the political will to advance knowledge and to support public health practice.

The Young Professional Achievement Award to recognize young (under 40 years of age at the time of the Conference) outstanding professional leaders whose early work is making substantial contributions to the field.

The Zena Stein and Mervyn Susser Award For Lifetime Achievement, which is intended to be a capstone award to recognize an internationally or nationally known expert or team of experts who have contributed broadly and substantially to the advancement of the field of MCH epidemiology throughout their career, and whose work has significant and lasting impact.

The 2008 recipients will be announced at the annual meeting of the Coalition for Excellence in MCH Epidemiology in Atlanta, December 10-12. The deadline for 2009 nominations has not been set yet, but traditionally the deadline has been in June. For further information, please go to <http://www.citymatch.org/mchepiawards.htm>

Congratulations to the 2007 recipients:

2007 Advancing Knowledge Award

Michael Kramer, Departments of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and Pediatrics, McGill University

2007 Effective Practice Award

Kimberlee Wyche-Etheridge, Nashville-Davidson County Health Department (local level)

Wanda Barfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (state (Massachusetts) level)

Carrie Shapiro-Mendoza, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (national level)

2007 Excellence in Teaching Award

Russell Kirby, Department of Maternal and Child Health, University of Alabama at Birmingham

2007 Young Professional Achievement Award

Charlan Kroelinger, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

2007 Zena Stein and Mervyn Susser Award for Lifetime Achievement

Irvin Emanuel, University of Washington

SAVE THE DATE
2009 SPER Annual Conference:

June 22-23, 2009: Anaheim, CA (*On-line abstract submissions due February 6, 2008 5pm local time*)

Future SPER Annual Conference:

June 22-23 2010 - Seattle, WA

June 20-21 2011 - Montreal, QC in conjunction with the Epi Congress

**2009 membership renewal information will be coming
to your email the beginning of October**