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Society for Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology 30th Annual Meeting: Present and Future

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On 19–20 June 2017, The Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology (SPER) met in Seattle, Washington, for their 30th Annual Meeting. The meeting was a success and an ideal forum for discussing a wide variety of topics. Of the 268 attendees, 111 were trainees.

The annual Advanced Methods Workshop was held Monday morning, immediately before the opening session. This year, 77 registrants learned *Sensitivity Analysis for Missing Data: The ‘how to’ for the ‘what if’* from Neil Perkins and Rose Radin (Division of Intramural Population Health Research, NICHD, Washington, DC, USA) and *Causal impact: A gentle introduction to pursuing more policy-relevant epidemiologic investigations* from Daniel Westreich (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA) and Elizabeth Rogawski (University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA). The Workshop was organized by SPER’s student representative, Sara Pugh, and Sarah Tinker (National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA) served as the moderator.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of SPER, this year’s meeting started earlier in the day than is usual and included an additional plenary session. The Opening Panel celebrate 30 years of achievements in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology. The session was moderated by Michael Bloom (University of Albany, Albany, NY, USA) one previous of our Student Prize winners and included presentations by an additional five of our past Student Prize winners. Claudia Holzman (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA) described changes in the epidemiology of preterm birth over the past 30 years. Pauline Mendola (Division of Intramural Population Health Research, NICHD, Bethesda, MD, USA) noted the dramatic increase in the number of publications related to the reproductive health risks of environmental exposures. Laura Schieve (National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA) described changes in the reported prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders in the past 30 years, and Candice Johnson (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention, Cincinnati, OH, USA) described the evolution of what we know about the epidemiology of birth defects. Finally, Jennifer Hutcheon (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, USA) gave an overview of how methods to carry out and analyse epidemiologic studies of paediatric and perinatal conditions have evolved since the Society was established. The session was inspiring – not only because it made us realise how far we have come – but also because it was a powerful reminder of the role that our members have played in bringing about this progress.

In the following session, we celebrated yet another anniversary – the 50th since the NIH Division of Intramural Population Health Research (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) was established; the session was moderated by Una Grewal (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, MD, USA). Just before the first poster session and Opening Reception, Nedra Whitehead (RTI International, Atlanta, GA, USA) moderated the first of this year's two speed poster sessions. For the second year, speed-poster presentations gave us a glimpse into the exciting and diverse research featured in the poster sessions. Also for the second year, we had awards for the best posters in each session presented by trainees. For poster session A, Daniel Kuhr (Medical Research Scholars Program, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD, USA) was honoured and Kristen Moore (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institutes of Health, Research Triangle Park, NC, USA) received honourable mention. Carina Bagge (University of Aarhus, Denmark) was awarded the Heinz Berendes Award.

Our events on June 20th started with three well-attended roundtable sessions. Tania Lombo Rodriguez (National Institutes of Health, Washington, DC, USA) oversaw a session on '*SPER meets ECHO: The NIH Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program*', Jonathan Snowden (Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland, OR, USA) moderated a discussion on '*Epidemiologic perspectives on physiologic pregnancy and childbirth: a growing field of epidemiologic inquiry*', and Michael Bloom (University of Albany, Albany, NY, USA) led a group discussion on '*Teaching reproductive, perinatal, and pediatric epidemiology – challenges & obstacles to training the next generation*'.

The first plenary session of the morning, moderated by Stephanie Engel (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA), focused on neurodevelopment and ended with the Student Prize Paper presentation. This year's winner was Melanie Jacobson, who presented her paper '*Thyroid hormones and menstrual function in a longitudinal cohort of premenopausal women*', part of her doctoral research, carried out at Emory University, Atlanta Georgia.

The following session started with the introduction of the winner of this year's Rising Star Award, Deshayne Fell (University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, USA), followed by the winner of the Mentoring Award, Claudia Holzman (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA). Michel S Kramer (McGill University, Montreal, QC, USA) received the President's Award as a recognition for his impact on the field as a scholar and a mentor and for his many contributions to the Society. The morning continued with a plenary session moderated by Lisa Bodnar (University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA), on foetal and childhood growth, and the second speed-poster session, moderated by Anne Marie Jukic (Yale

University, New Haven, CT, USA). Poster session B was held during lunch. The trainee poster award for this session went to Helen Chin (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, NC, USA). Farah Qureshi (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA) received recognition as honourable mention.

Frederic Rivara (University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA) delivered the Keynote Address entitled '*Guns, children, and the peril to science*'. His talk highlighted the epidemic of gun deaths in the United States, particularly among youth. He noted that the majority of gun deaths are not related to self-protection or homicide, but rather represent suicides. Given that many of these deaths are the result of an impulsive act, he pointed out how laws that limit ready access to guns have the potential to impact these figures, given that, unlike with other means, suicide by firearm is almost invariably successful. He further described how the research in the epidemiology of gun-related deaths has fallen victim to politics and the type of changes, such as the requirement of trigger locks, that may help reduce gun-related deaths while being politically acceptable.

Two final plenary sessions ended the scientific portion of the meeting. Mark Klebanoff (Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA) moderated a session on perinatal outcomes and Brian Whitcomb (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA) moderated a session on maternal mortality and morbidity.

Lastly, we held the SPER annual business meeting. We started by welcoming our incoming officers Courtney Lynch as President-Elect (Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA), Treasurer Neil Perkins (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, MD, USA), Member-At-Large Nicole Talge (Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA), International Liaison Natasha Nassar (University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia) and Student Representative Carmen Messerlian (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA). Outgoing officers were thanked for their service to the Society, including Past President Suzan Carmichael (Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, USA), Danelle Lobdell (US EPA, Raleigh, NC, USA), Sarah Tinker (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA), Jennifer Zeitlin (INSERM, Center for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Paris, France), and Sara Pugh (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, MD, USA).

The business meeting proceeded to discuss procedural and administrative matters, and ideas on how to continue building on our strengths as a Society – particularly our commitment to training the next generation of researchers in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology. In this spirit, the Executive Committee is considering initiatives to increase support to trainees and members who have just entered a research position – by instituting a 'remote mentoring' programme, in which more experienced members will give junior colleagues advice on how to navigate a highly competitive research environment. We are also exploring strategies to encourage participation of our international members to SPER, and we hope to see the fruits of these efforts already at the next Annual Meeting, with more participants and presentations from various parts of the world. In addition, significant developments in epidemiologic methods, particularly in relation to causal inference, have transformed epidemiologic research over the past years. The next meeting (Baltimore, MD; 18–19 June 2018) will

provide an opportunity to reflect on how these developments have affected research in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology.

Biography

Carolyn Drews-Botsch is the outgoing SPER President. She is Professor and Vice-Chair of the Department of Epidemiology at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. Her research focuses on treatment of congenital cataract, risk factors for and the long term impact of poor foetal growth, and the impact of socioeconomic factors on cognitive development. She is also interested in issues related to mismeasurement in epidemiologic studies and understanding the impact of information bias on the results of epidemiologic studies.

Olga Basso is the current President of SPER. She is an associate professor of epidemiology at McGill University (Canada) since 2010, where she holds a joint appointment in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Occupational Health. Educated in Italy, she had previously worked at the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (USA) and at the Danish Epidemiology Science Centre at the University of Aarhus (Denmark). Her main research interest is in reproductive epidemiology, particularly infertility and perinatal health; her work addresses both substantive and methodological questions.