



SPER Summer Newsletter

President's Corner



Executive Committee (2019-2020)

President:

Brian Whitcomb

Past-President:

Courtney Lynch

President-Elect:

Lauren Wise

Secretary:

Sarah Keim

Treasurer:

Neil Perkins

Members-at-Large:

Anne Marie Jukic

Michael Kramer

Claire Margerison

Nicole Talge

International Representative:

Natasha Nassar

Student Representative:

Krista Wollny

Administrator:

Sue Bevan

Colleagues,

On behalf of SPER's Executive Committee, I hope this edition of the newsletter finds you well.

The months of May, when our spring newsletter is usually distributed, and June, when our Annual Meeting is usually held, have both come and gone. My term as President ended on June 15th – the date the meeting would have been held. As you likely now know, **the in-person Annual Meeting of SPER for 2020 has been cancelled**. This President's Corner, which I am writing as Past President, and elsewhere in this summer edition of the Newsletter, includes **background about the cancellation of the in-person meeting and updates and information about ongoing business and the state of the Society**.

With regard to the Annual Meeting, it may be helpful to start with recounting of events. As you know, our last newsletter was distributed in February. During the months of February and March, the Program Committee worked diligently to complete planning for the June Annual Meeting of SPER in Boston. At the end of March, notifications were sent out that the Executive Committee decided to postpone that Annual Meeting until December. By April, Awards Committees chaired by Courtney Lynch and Lauren Wise completed work to determine winners of the **2020 SPER Awards** for *Student Prize Paper*, the *Heinz Berendes Travel Award*, *Rising Star*, *Mentoring*, and the *President's Award (see below)*. During April, voting was completed on the **2020 SPER Elections (see below)**. Newly elected Executive Committee members unceremoniously began their roles on June 15th. From March until early July we continued planning a December in-person 2020 SPER Annual Meeting in Boston. And, somewhere in that time range, many of you received long awaited notification about abstracts that had been submitted back in January. But, earlier this month, because of the combination of institutional and international travel restrictions, Massachusetts state laws on group gatherings, and concern for the uncertain

public health safety, we determined that an in-person meeting would not be feasible, and the decision was made to cancel the in-person meeting in Boston in December.

Circumstances have made planning the meeting a complicated endeavor, and I know it has caused uncertainty and inconvenience for us all. In mid-March, because of the growing evidence of the scope of COVID-19 and its impact, we began careful deliberations about what to do about the meeting, including the possibility of outright cancelation because of the pandemic. Among the many factors considered in these decisions was what would best serve the interests of the membership, as well as concern for the finances of the Society and fees it would have been forced to pay for cancelation of the meeting. When SER announced plans to postpone in hopes that an in-person meeting would be possible, we followed suit, but unfortunately those hopes have not worked out. We have plans to return to Boston in 2025, but there will be no in-person meeting of SPER in 2020. We are deeply disappointed that we are unable hold the in-person meeting and be together with friends and colleagues. **We are evaluating other possibilities in terms of member interest and the capabilities of the Society, and we will share information as plans develop.**

It has been more than a month since the murder of George Floyd that led to nationwide protest against police brutality, pervasive racism, and violence against Black Americans. As public health researchers, we should be familiar with the disparities in reproductive, perinatal, and pediatric health outcomes that reflect long-standing inequities, and the role of racism in public health. It is a time of reckoning for all of us as individuals and collectively, as stewards of the world that will be inherited by future generations. It is also a time of reckoning for us as a Society, and for the Executive Committee as stewards of SPER. Speaking on behalf of the leadership of SPER, **we are committed to efforts toward equity and inclusion, and taking actions to address these issues both in terms of the research we support, and within the Society.**

To achieve these goals, we invite suggestions for new ideas, and will continue with efforts already begun aimed at addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we strongly encourage your participation. **In 2019, we established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group** as part of the Outreach Committee chaired by member-at-large Claire Margerison. This group has developed a Travel Award to Promote Diversity and is currently working on new initiatives including development of online content to highlight contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) scholars in pediatric & perinatal epidemiology. In order to emphasize these issues at the Annual Meeting, we will include representation from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working group on the Program Committee for SPER 2021. The mission statement of the Society as described in our bylaws is “to foster reproductive, perinatal and pediatric research. This research includes the study of any factors that influence maternal health and the health and development of children, from their conception through their adolescence.” It is our goal to make SPER a home for presentation of science and exchange of ideas among reproductive,

perinatal, and pediatric researchers. This necessitates creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for BIPOC scholars.

In our efforts to create lasting positive change, we encourage members to get involved in this important work. If you are interested in joining these efforts, please use this [link](#) to sign up for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group as part of the SPER Outreach Committee or send inquiries to the committee's Chair, Claire Margerison (margeris@msu.edu).

More generally, during 2019-20, we have worked to promote the continued evolution of SPER to include more opportunities for member participation and engagement, and for the Society to best reflect the interests of members and important developments in the field. The four standing committees lead by Executive Committee members – including the Outreach Committee noted above, have been active through the year, and the Program Committee provided an opportunity for member volunteer to help create the meeting agenda. We know there is great interest in getting involved with the society and playing a role in shaping SPER, and we hope you will take opportunities to get involved through participation with these committees, or by suggesting new ideas. The Society has continued to grow and benefit from feedback and participation by longstanding and new members. **We welcome and appreciate your input. Please contact Committee Chairs with ideas or reach out to other members of the Executive Committee.**

Starting on June 15th, we began SPER's 34th year, under the leadership of current SPER President, Lauren Wise. I want to express my deep appreciation for the efforts of all who have contributed time and energy during the past year. Special thanks goes to those whose terms on the EC ended in June, including *Michael Kramer* (Member-at-large), *Neil Perkins* (Treasurer), and *Courtney Lynch* (Past-President), who has previously served on the EC twice previously (Member-at-large, 2006-2010; Secretary, 2011-2013), and whose tireless work has left an indelible mark on the Society and been a true inspiration. Along with the newly elected members of the EC, Lauren has exciting ideas for the Society, and I look forward to seeing them take shape.

It has been a privilege serving as President and am grateful for the opportunity and for all those who have provided support.

Brian Whitcomb

SPER President, 2019 – 2020

Announcements

Executive Committee Election Results

Thanks to all members who offered their service to SPER and ran for election! Our newly elected officers for 2020 are:

President-Elect

Lisa Bodnar, Ph.D., MPH, RD
Professor
Dept. of Epidemiology
University of Pittsburgh

Treasurer

Erinn Hade, Ph.D.
Research Assistant Professor
Dept. of Biomedical Informatics
The Ohio State University

Member at Large

Audrey Gaskins, Sc.D.
Assistant Professor
Dept of Epidemiology
Emory University

Student Representative

Sonia Grandi, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health
and Human Development

International Representative

Siri Håberg, M.D.

Deputy Director, Centre for Fertility & Health
Norwegian Institute of Public Health

SPER 2020 Awards

Heinz Berendes

Hanan El Marroun, Ph.D.
Erasmus Medical Center
Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Paper: *Every week counts: a population-based study of gestational age at birth and brain morphology at 10 years*

Rising Star Award

Samantha Parker Kelleher, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Epidemiology
Boston University School of Public Health

Student Prize Paper

Alyssa Harlow, MPH
Dept. of Epidemiology
Boston University School of Public Health
Paper: *A Prospective Study of Male Preconception Marijuana Use and Spontaneous Abortion*

Mentoring Award

Brian Whitcomb, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
University of Massachusetts Amherst School of Public
Health and Health Sciences

President's Award

Russell Kirby, Ph.D., MS
Distinguished Professor & Marrell Endowed Chair
Dept of Community & Family Health
University of South Florida College of Public Health



Many thanks to....



The 2020 Program Committee

We wish to extend a special thanks to the 2020 Program Committee members for their flexibility, dedication, and input while navigating the unprecedented challenges and uncertainties of this year.

Jennifer Allsworth	Sonia Grandi	Kimberly McKee	Robert Platt
Helen Chin	Anne Marie Jukic	Pauline Mendola	Elizabeth Widen
Valery Danilack	Russ Kirby	Susanna Mitro	Krista Wollny
Leslie Farland	Mark Klebanoff	Natasha Nassar	
Kelly Ferguson	Rebecca Lacey	Emily Oken	

The Annual Meeting Abstract Reviewers

Thank you to everyone who reviewed abstracts for the 2020 SPER Annual Meeting. We appreciate the time and attention you took while conducting your reviews.

Alex Acsenvil	Tamala Gondwe	Jennifer Lyons	Katie Tastad
Nedghie Adrien	David Gonzalez	Angela Malek	Jagjit Singh Teji
Kayla Anderson	Sonia Grandi	David Mallinson	Peter Tennant
Izzuddin Aris	Rachel Gruver	Reem Masarwa	Marie Thoma
Sylvia Badon	Diana Haggerty	Krystin Matthews	Sarah Twardowski
Lord Blacker Dublin	Catherine Haggerty	Carmen Messerlian	Kristen Upson
Sheree Boulet	Clinton Hall	Susanna Mitro	Yassaman Vafai
Marit Bovbjerg	Quaker Harmon	Sunni Mumford	Connor Van Meter
Jessie Buckley	Dominique Heinke	Natasha Nassar	Ilana Vardi
Catherine Bulka	Barbara Hudson-Hanley	Collette Ncube	Catherine Vladutiu
Jenny Carwile	Marni Jacobs	Zhongzheng Niu	Dongqing Wang
Carolyn Cesta	Candice Johnson	Carrie Nobles	Kari Weber
Helen Chin	Anne Marie Jukic	Maria Ospina	Barrett Welch
Aliki Christou	Deborah Karasek	Michelle Pearl	Shi Wu Wen
Tim Ciesielski	Menolly Kaufman	Maria Perez-Patron	Amelia Wesselink
Sara Conroy	Sarah Keim	Wei Perng	Lauren Wise
Kyley Cox	Jane Khoury	Gentiane Perrault Sullivan	Krista Wollny
Carolyn Cramoy	Stephanie Kim	Farah Qureshi	Mollie Wood
Michaila Czarnik	Keewan Kim	Sonia Robinson	Seungmi Yang
Valery Danilack	Russell Kirby	Melissa Schiff	Edwina Yeung
Elizabeth DeVilbiss	Mark Klebanoff	Natalie Scime	Samrawit Yisahak
Deshayne Fell	Claudia Kozinetz	Yuri Sebastiao	Ya-Hui Yu
Kelly Ferguson	Michael Kramer	Carrie Shapiro-Mendoza	Kathy Zhao
Karen Flannagan	Samantha Lain	Jaime Slaughter	Yeyi Zhu
Joshua Freeman	Christine Langton	Danielle Stevens	Kristen Palmsten
Audrey Gaskins	Yu (Seashore) Li	Kelly Strutz	Brandie DePaoli Taylor
Akhgar Ghassabian	Courtney Lynch	Nicole Talge	Elleni Hailu

Committee News

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee was delighted to spread the word about society news and publicize sub-committee activities through our social media platforms and seasonal newsletters. During this past year, we launched several initiatives to enhance member engagement, most notably our live tweeting and discussion moderation of the online webinars. Many thanks to the Communications Committee members who helped develop these plans – along with the plans we look forward to implementing over the next year! If you are interested in joining our vibrant group, please click here to contact us: <https://sper.org/committees/>.

Communications Committee Membership (2019-2020)

Nicole Talge (Chair)	Dominique Heinke	Claire Margerison	Danielle Stevens
Emily Barrett	Michael Kramer	Sunni Mumford	Krista Wollny

Digital Engagement Committee (DEC)

I am grateful to the members of the Digital Engagement Committee who have organized fantastic webinars over the past year! The DEC was launched last summer and has been able to put on events almost every month since then. We are looking forward to planning additional events this summer and in the following year. We are always open to suggestions of online events from SPER members – please let us know how we can serve you!

DEC Membership (2019-2020)

Anne Marie Jukic (Chair)	Luter-King Fasehun	Shahpar Najmabadi	Lauren Wise
Cande Ananth	Sonia Grandi	Natasha Nassar	Krista Wollny
Jessie Buckley	Stephanie Leonard	Shu Qin Wei	Yeyi Zhu
Timothy Ciesielski	Buyun Liu	Brian Whitcomb	

Outreach Committee

The Society for Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research (SPER) and the Outreach Committee is happy to announce a new **Travel Award to Promote Diversity**. The winner of the award will receive \$1500 to be used at the winner's discretion to help defray costs associated with attending the SPER Annual Meeting (including, but not limited to: travel, lodging, and childcare). In addition, the registration fee for the meeting will be waived. Stay tuned for details on applying for the award for the rescheduled 2020 meeting in the fall.

Outreach Committee Membership (2019-2020)

Claire Margerison (Chair)	Reem Masarwa	Nicole Talge
Irene Headen	Dawn Misra	Ugochi Vivian Ukah
Samantha Lain	Jaime Slaughter-Acey	
Stephanie Leonard	Jonathan Snowden	

Student & Postdoc Working Group

Over the course of the year, a Student and Post-Doc Working Group was formed to enhance trainee-led initiatives. The group has been discussing innovative ways to increase trainee engagement at the annual meeting, as well as throughout the year. In collaboration with SER, we hosted two online journal clubs, and look forward to hosting more. Thank you to the 2019-2020 committee members for your ideas and enthusiasm. If you are a trainee interested in joining this committee, please contact us here: <https://sper.org/committees/join-our-committee-student-and-post-doc/>

Student & Postdoc Working Group Membership (2019-2020)

Krista Wollny (Chair)
Stephanie Leonard

Buyun Liu
Susanna Mitro

Maria Politis
Danielle Stevens

Ugochi Vivian Ukah

2020 Annual Survey!

Although the in-person version of the 2020 Annual Meeting has been cancelled, we are excited to explore virtual formatting options – and we want to take your opinions and feedback into account as we consider our next steps!

Please consider completing a brief survey to share your thoughts about the Annual Meeting and the society in general by clicking on the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/sper2020>. If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact Lauren Wise (SPER President) at lwise@bu.edu or any member of the Executive Committee for assistance.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Looking for a job or fellowship? Recruiting for a position?

Explore the SPER jobs & fellowships bank! It currently has 13 listings, which include advertisements for postdoctoral fellowships and professorships. Check back regularly for timely access to these opportunities!

If you are looking to hire an epidemiologist with expertise in perinatal and/or pediatric health and would like to advertise your position on the SPER website, please [click here](#) to submit your contribution.

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