



Executive Committee (2020-2021)

President:

Lauren Wise

Past-President:

Brian Whitcomb

President-Elect:

Lisa Bodnar

Secretary:

Sarah Keim

Treasurer:

Erinn Hade

Members-at-Large:

Audrey Gaskins

Anne Marie Jukic

Claire Margerison

Nicole Talge

International Representative:

Siri Haberg

Student Representative:

Sonia Grandi

Administrator:

Sue Bevan

SPER Newsletter (Fall 2020)

President's Corner

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and healthy. While the news of imminent vaccine approval and dissemination is very encouraging, the recent resurgence of COVID-19 in several countries worldwide is of great concern. I remain optimistic that an in-person meeting will be possible in 2021. In the interim, I am thankful for the opportunity to hold virtual gatherings of our members. I look forward to “seeing” you at SPER’s 33rd Annual Meeting, which will take place virtually on Tuesday, December 15th. It promises to be an engaging event filled with many outstanding symposia and oral abstract sessions.



As this is my first newsletter as President, I wanted to take this opportunity to share my mission for the coming year. My primary goal will be to emphasize and reinforce efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in all facets of the Society. The Society is fully committed to promoting actions that confront systemic racism and injustice both within and outside of SPER. Our long-term and sustained work includes listening to members of SPER from historically oppressed or under-represented backgrounds, addressing inequitable structures and processes, creating inclusive environments, and providing opportunities to highlight research on injustice and inequity in reproductive, perinatal, and pediatric health along intersecting dimensions including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, disability status, and other factors. SPER is committed to supporting the research and careers of BIPOC members by recognizing the barriers they face and will take steps to expand participation of underrepresented individuals within and outside of SPER. I am particularly indebted to the members of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) subcommittee who have been working tirelessly to develop and implement new initiatives to improve the culture of

SPER so that it is more welcoming to all individuals in our field and to identify ways to make the structures and processes of SPER more equitable. I pledge to continue listening to new ideas for making sustained structural changes to SPER and would like to invite you to share your thoughts with me (lwise@bu.edu). Below, I provide updates on: 1) activities of the SPER committees, including new initiatives by the DEI Committee, 2) the 2020 virtual annual meeting, 3) planning for the 2021 Annual Meeting in San Diego, and 4) other activities.

(1) Activities of SPER Committees

Since 2018, SPER formed new committees [<https://sper.org/committees/>] in an effort to increase opportunities for member involvement. The *Outreach Committee*, chaired by Claire Margerison, has been overseeing efforts toward improving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Society and has several initiatives in progress. Some of these new initiatives include:

- Offering travel awards to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- Reducing financial barriers to joining SPER (e.g., offering waivers and bundled memberships);
- Increasing the transparency by which SPER selects its leadership, the content of its annual meeting, and session moderators (as detailed in the new “SPER processes” document);
- Including at least one standing member from the DEI committee on the Program Committee (which selects content for the Annual Meeting and online sessions);
- Increasing mentorship and support of junior members;
- Revising abstract submission categories to improve matching of abstracts with appropriate reviewers;
- Encouraging speakers at all SPER sessions to reflect on how their work has the potential to impact health equity.

Most of the above initiatives are now described in detail on the SPER website; others will be included in the forthcoming “SPER Processes” document, which will be posted on the Society’s website by December 31, 2020.

The *Communications Committee*, chaired by Nicole Talge, generates email, social media, and newsletters to disseminate news about SPER and communicate with the membership. The *Digital Engagement Committee*, chaired by Anne Marie Jukic, has organized several informative webinars throughout the year, including Speed Poster Sessions of abstracts accepted for the 2020 Annual Meeting. Several more webinars are planned for December and beyond, and are listed here: <https://sper.org/online-events/>. Attendance at the webinars has been high, and we hope you are enjoying these presentations. The *Student and Post-doc Working Group*, chaired by Sonia Grandi and supported by last year’s Student

Representative, Krista Wollny, has been busy planning various activities for student involvement with the Society, including the Advanced Methods Workshop. All four of these groups continue to welcome volunteers to get involved; for more information about the committees, please visit our website: <https://sper.org/committees/>.

(2) SPER's 33rd Annual Meeting – Virtual Conference 2020

Virtual SPER 2020 will be held on December 15th from 10am to 7:30pm EST. We hope you'll join us! The program includes a combination of plenary sessions and parallel sessions on December 15th. There will be four symposia proposed by members, which cover a range of topics, and several plenary sessions. Dr. Matthew Gillman, Director of the Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes Program, and a leader in life course epidemiology, will deliver the keynote address. We received 333 abstract submissions in 2020—the largest number received to date—and we thank our abstract reviewers for their time. Although there will be no poster sessions at the virtual meeting, all accepted abstracts from current members will be published in a special issue of *Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, the Society's journal. The complete program for the 2020 Annual Meeting is posted on our website: <https://sper.org/>.

Congratulations to the 2020 SPER Award Winners, who will be honored for their work at the virtual meeting. Thanks to Past-President Brian Whitcomb and all the members of the Program Committee for their hard work planning the December 2020 meeting; the keynote speaker; all of the presenters, abstract reviewers, volunteers, and attendees.

The meeting content was selected by the 2020 Program Committee, acknowledged below, and includes students, postdocs, faculty, and past presidents of SPER. I look forward to working with the 2021 Program Committee to plan an exciting agenda for SPER 2021.

(3) SPER's 34rd Annual Meeting – 2021

I am delighted to announce SPER's keynote speaker for the 2021 annual meeting: Dr. Elizabeth Howell. Dr. Howell is a physician, researcher, and advocate committed to improving the health and well-being of women. Her scholarship focuses on the study of racial and ethnic inequities in maternal and child health, postpartum depression, and maternal and infant morbidity and mortality. Her research is recognized for shaping national policy and implementing strategies to reduce racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality. In 2020, Dr. Howell became Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. You can learn more about Dr. Howell here: <https://www.pennmedicine.org/updates/blogs/womens-health/2020/september/meet-elizabeth-howell-md>

Please note that 2021 annual meeting abstract submission opens on December 2, 2020 and registration opens on January 15, 2021. Abstract submissions are due on January 28, 2021, 11:59pm PT. The

symposium deadline will also be on January 28th, 2021, 11:59pm PT. Award nomination submissions are due on February 4, 2021 at 11:59pm PT. More information about the awards, submission material and requirements, and eligibility can be found on our website at <https://sper.org/sper-awards/>. The early registration deadline for the annual meeting is May 10, 2021. We are still not 100% certain about whether the meeting will be virtual or in-person. We will keep members posted as soon as we finalize the decision.

(4) Other Activities

Elections: as described in more detail elsewhere in the newsletter, there are three positions on the executive committee that will be open for election this spring, including President-Elect, Member-at-Large, and Student Representative. We are actively soliciting candidates for these positions. Please contact us if you have questions about the positions or process.

Bylaws: Past-President Brian Whitcomb drafted a proposal for modifications to the bylaws (*e.g.*, eliminating reference to mailed ballots!). As required by our current bylaws, this proposal will be posted along with the election to be voted on by the membership.

Remember to check the website and follow our Twitter account @SPER_news to stay up-to-date with the organization. The Executive Committee has been working to address issues based on feedback received on the Annual Survey (thanks to the 170 of you who completed the survey), including developing new opportunities for engagement and participation, and, of course, planning SPER 2021.

We are always happy for feedback and suggestions, so if you have ideas for how improve our organization or any questions or concerns, please contact me (lwise@bu.edu) or other members of the Executive Committee (<https://sper.org/about-sper-2/executive-committee/>). And, thanks to all for submitting abstracts and symposia proposals, serving on committees, and/or volunteering to review abstracts and other submissions. We are happy to see so many people involved with the society, and we appreciate your contributions. I look forward to working with the Executive Committee and what promises to be an exciting year.

Lastly – please remember to renew your membership for 2020. Your continued support of the Society means more this year than ever!

See you at the 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting in December!

Lauren Wise

SPER President, 2020-2021

lwise@bu.edu

2020 SPER Annual Meeting

Tuesday, December 15

Coming to you virtually!

Advanced Methods Workshop

This year's Advanced Methods workshop focused on semi-competing risks and was led by Dr. Sebastien Haneuse & Mr. Harrison Reeder (Harvard University) on Tues, Nov 10.

Many thanks to our presenters for an engaging and informative webinar!



Unable to attend the workshop this year?

Don't worry! For only \$25, you can access the workshop recording and materials on the SPER website.

[Click here](#) for more information!

Annual Meeting Virtual Program (Registration required; Discounted rates!)

We have pulled together an exciting line-up of reproductive, perinatal, and pediatric research presentations for the virtual program on December 15!

Our one-day Annual Meeting program includes:

- Concurrent contributed sessions (obstetric health; perinatal outcomes)
- Four symposia (machine learning; epigenetic mechanisms; pregnancy & birth outcomes among sexual minority women; gynecologic epidemiology)
- Keynote Presentation by Matthew Gillman, M.D. (National Institutes of Health)
- Plenaries on fetal growth & child development, fertility & fecundity, and perinatal exposure to medications & substances
- SPER Award presentations
- SPER Business meeting
- And more! [Click here](#) for the Annual Meeting program and a list of presenters!

Annual Meeting Registration

We recognize the financial impact of COVID-19 may serve as an obstacle to participating in the Annual Meeting. As a result, we are offering two tiers of registration fees: Regular or Discounted.

[Click here](#) for more information and to register!

Speed Posters & Webinars (Registration required; free!)

Mark your calendars! Due to the abbreviated format of the 2020 Annual Meeting, we are thrilled to offer several Speed Poster sessions and webinars to expand access to many of the exciting program contributions! Registration is required but is completely free -- [click here](#) to sign up!

Here is the upcoming schedule of events:

Session Title	Date	Time (Eastern)
Pregnancy Health and Development	20-Nov	1-2PM
Stillbirth	1-Dec	12-1PM
Social and Structural Determinants of Pregnancy Health	2-Dec	2-3PM
Obstetric Health	4-Dec	12-1PM
Obesity in pregnancy	8-Dec	12:30-1:30PM

Many thanks to participants in the first three Speed Poster sessions on Methods, Obstetric Health, and Pediatric Health as well as the webinar on Infection in pregnancy!

Twitter Posters (optional)

Were you looking forward to presenting at this year's Annual Meeting and are looking for opportunities to engage with the SPER membership about your research?



Consider making a Twitter Poster! The process is simple:

- [Use this template](#) (optimized aspect ratio for Twitter) to create three slides that summarize key points from your presentation. credit: Mike Morrison.
- Save the template as an animated GIF. The resulting file will cycle among the three slides as part of a single image. To do this:

If you have PowerPoint 365:

- File → Export → Animated GIF. Save the animated GIF your computer,

If you do not have PowerPoint 365:

- File → Export → Create a Video. Save the video to your computer.
 - Use a freely available Video to Animated GIF converter (<https://ezgif.com/video-to-gif>) and save the GIF to your computer
- Using your Twitter account, post the animated GIF with the hashtag **#SPER_TwitterPosters2020** on **Monday, Dec 14th**. Don't forget to tag @SPER_News, too!

Questions? [Click here](#) for a short video description of the process!

Special Thanks To...

The 2020 Program Committee

We wish to again 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	

Committee News

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is excited to spread the word about society news and publicize sub-committee activities through our social media platforms and seasonal newsletters. We have 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, including Member Spotlights, collaborations with *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* and more! If you are interested in joining our vibrant group, please click here to contact us: <https://sper.org/committees/>.

Communications Committee Membership (2020-2021)

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

Digital Engagement Committee (DEC)

In response to input from the 2020 Annual Survey, the Digital Engagement Committee has been working hard to respond to our members' requests for MORE online content! The SPER online events are organized and hosted by dedicated members of the Digital Engagement Committee (see below). In addition, we have some volunteers who are hosting online webinars or speed posters in November & December, and SPER greatly appreciates their contributions: Dominique Heinke, Hannah Jahnke, Lindsey Russo, Anita Subramanian, Brandie DePaoli Taylor, & Elizabeth Widen. Please click [here](#) for a comprehensive list of DEC events for November & December and to register (for free!).

We are looking for ideas for webinars for spring 2021. Please contact Anne Marie Jukic with suggestions for speakers (jukica@niehs.nih.gov).

DEC Membership (2020-2021)

Anne Marie Jukic (Chair)	Luther-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/Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

The Outreach/Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee meets monthly. We have recently developed the Travel Award to Promote Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, two of which will be offered for the 2021 Annual Meeting. Details are available on the SPER website for those interested in applying. We have also made changes to membership in an effort to reduce financial barriers: offering waivers and bundled memberships to institutions. Our current work focuses on compiling and analyzing data on diversity and equity within the SPER, identifying ways to make the processes and structures of SPER more equitable, and developing processes and content for the 2021 Annual Meeting. Please join us on **Thursday, January 14 at 4pm Eastern Time** for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Listening Session open to all SPER members and those considering membership. We would like to hear from you about your experiences, thoughts, and concerns related to DEI within SPER.

Outreach Committee Membership (2020-2021)

Claire Margerison (Chair)	Deshayne Fell	Reem Masarwa	Jonathan Snowden
Shalmali Bane	Irene Headen	Dawn Misra	Nicole Talge
Michelle Dimitris	Stephanie Leonard	Olivia Orta	Vivian Ukah
Galit Levi Dunietz	Angela Malek	Jaime Slaughter-Acey	

Student & Postdoc Working Group

I am delighted to serve as the SPER student/postdoc representative for the 2020-2021 SPER executive committee. The committee has a lineup of events planned for trainees this year focused on mentorship, developing an online presence, networking in a virtual world, and much more. Be on the lookout for details of the events in the coming months! We would like to hear your voices, feel free to reach out with any comments/suggestions.

Student & Postdoc Working Group Membership (2020-2021)

Sonia Grandi (Chair)	Michelle Dimitris	Sarah Twardowski	Krista Wollny
Stephanie Eick	Danielle Stevens	Vivian Ukah	

Coming Soon!

2021 Annual Meeting Planning

It's already time to begin planning the 2021 Annual Meeting, and there will be many opportunities for you to become involved in the process! Stay tuned for more details in the coming 6-8 weeks about the following:

- Annual Meeting Program Committee participation
- Symposium Submissions (deadline: 1/28/2021)
- Abstract Submissions (deadline: 1/28/2021)
- SPER Awards (deadline: 2/4/2021)

Executive Committee Nominations & Elections (Spring 2021)

Nominations will be sought in Spring 2021 for **President** (2021-2024), one **Member-at-Large** (2021-2025), and **SPER Student Representative** (2021-2022). All terms will begin in June 2021.

The **President** will serve as President-Elect (2021-2022), President (2022-2023), and Past-President (2023-2024). The main duties of the President-Elect are to help the President develop plans for the Annual Meeting and to coordinate the selection of the Student Prize Paper Award, Rising Star Award, and Mentoring Award Recipients. The President coordinates planning for the Annual Meeting in collaboration with the 2021 Program Committee and

is in charge of Executive Committee decision-making. The Past-President coordinates 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 Member-at-Large elected this cycle will be responsible for communications, primarily producing the SPER Newsletter (published 3 times a year) and coordinating the society's social media accounts. This member will replace Nicole Talge.

The **Student Representative** participates in Executive Committee meetings, encourages and facilitates student participation in SPER and plans the Advanced Methods Workshop, which precedes the Annual Meeting. This member will replace Sonia Grandi.

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