

**Executive Committee
(2025-2026)**

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Dawn Misra

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Edwina Yeung

President-Elect:

Sarka Lisonkova

Secretary:

Stefania Papatheodorou

Treasurer:

Candice Johnson

Members-at-Large:

Stefanie Hinkle

Stephanie Leonard

Andrew Williams

Kari Weber

International Representative:

Neda Razaz

Trainee Representative:

Xuanxuan Zhu

Administrator:

Sue Bevan

SPER Newsletter (Winter 2026)

President's Corner

I am excited to share with you what we have been working on this year. First, a shout out to those of you who have been busy reviewing our abstracts. We are fortunate to have both many volunteer reviewers and many abstract submissions. Second, I thank all who volunteered for the Virtual and Annual Program Committees. We had an overwhelming response and were able to include nearly all of you. If you were not selected, it was likely because you previously had participated. Please do volunteer next year if you were not selected this year.



Virtual Meeting

We are sponsoring our 3rd SPER Virtual Meeting, which will take place on April 21st. The virtual meeting aligns with our values of inclusivity and accessibility. Some of our members lack sufficient funds for travel, an increasingly common problem. Others may have a disability impeding travel or care taking roles that make the Annual Meeting difficult. We recognized the importance of presentations in the careers of our members and the need to be in the community of the best scientists in our field (that's SPER!). The Virtual Meeting is free to anyone interested in attending. Neither attendees nor presenters are required to be members, so please share information about the meeting widely. My department at Michigan State University holds a "watch party" in which the Virtual Meeting is shown on a conference room screen to encourage our trainees and faculty to have an even stronger sense of community while "attending."

Annual Meeting

I am delighted to announce that **Dr. Sonia Hernández-Díaz has agreed to be the keynote speaker** at our Annual Meeting. Dr. Hernandez-Diaz is the Director of the Pharmacoepidemiology Program and Professor of Epidemiology at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health. Her area of interest is drug safety evaluation from

non-randomized data, with a special emphasis on the design, conduct, and analysis of studies in pregnant women and their infants. Examples of her work include inquiries of the comparative safety of psychotropics for pregnant women and their offspring using real world evidence from both pregnancy registries and large healthcare databases.

We will have an **Opening Panel** on the first day of the meeting: “**Introduction to the HEALTHY Brain and Child Development Study (HBCD)**, a National Resource for Early Brain Development.” We sometimes neglect the pediatric field within the Annual Meeting so we are putting a spotlight on it this year! The HBCD Study will enroll over 7,000 participating families across the United States and follow them from pregnancy through early childhood, with the long-term goal of characterizing how child development is affected by exposure to social and environmental experiences and conditions. This panel will provide an overview of the HBCD resource, including an introduction to study design, child brain imaging and developmental measures, findings from the first data release, and how to access public use data. Speakers include Stephanie M. Engel, PhD (UNC-Chapel Hill), Gretchen Bandoli, PhD (UC- San Diego), Ashley Acheson, PhD (U Arkansas Medical Sciences), and Jen Zink, PhD (LASSO Informatics).

Three **Symposia** (from 7 submissions) were selected for the Annual Meeting.

- Perinatal Pharmacoepidemiology: Moving Beyond Gestational Exposure & Congenital Malformation Risk
- Understanding social, contextual, and political drivers of Fertility, Pregnancy, and Reproductive Aging in Women After 40
- Health Equity Methods in Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research

Abstract review is currently in progress for the Annual Meeting with almost 200 abstracts under consideration.

Finally, this year will include an early breakfast session with Cande Ananth, editor-in-chief of the Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology journal, organized by our trainee representative Xuanxuan Zhu.

Our SPER in 2026

Science and public health continue to be under attack even as we have turned the calendar to 2026. We have also seen human rights violations by our government escalating within the U.S. While some may say unprecedented, many Americans have witnessed these actions previously, primarily in the treatment of those who have been considered “other” based on their race, ethnicity, sexual identity or other human characteristics.

Many of you are speaking up and taking action. As SPER members, we can specifically also take action where we have knowledge to share. We can speak to the public about the many health topics in which we are experts. Misinformation from government agencies and politicians has continued to spread unabated. Please consider speaking directly to our communities and to journalists. A thank you again to the substack “Your Local Epidemiologist” who are filling the void and bringing critical information to communities. Continue sharing your knowledge with your neighbors, family, fellow parents, and others in grocery store lines with you.

Some of our members are also uniquely vulnerable at this time, by nature of their gender identity, racial identity, immigration status, or employer. You may belong to a group that cannot publicly speak up but I hope that our society can provide a platform for speech that supports your work and identity.

I look forward to seeing you all in Phoenix in June!

Sincerely,

Dawn Misra

SPER President

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39th SPER Annual Meeting

June 22- 23, 2026 – Phoenix, AZ

Deadlines

Early Registration Deadline: May 12, 2026

<https://sper.org/annual-meeting-2/>

Call for Poster Judges

We are looking for volunteers to serve as judges during each of the poster sessions.

Judges are typically asked to visit 4-5 posters.

If you are able to help, please make sure to check “Yes” for “Poster Judges: Please check here if you would be willing to be a poster judge during one poster session for our student/trainee poster awards” in the Annual Meeting Registration Form. Thank you!

3rd Annual SPER Virtual Meeting

April 21, 2026

Register today - no registration fee!

<https://sper.org/virtual-meeting/>

Advanced Methods workshop (Registration required)

April 28, 2026
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm Eastern

The 2026 Advanced Methods Workshop will occur on Tuesday April 28th, 12:00 – 2:00pm Eastern with a session on “Separating causal questions from statistics with application to dietary interventions in the Project Viva cohort offspring” led by Drs. Jessica G. Young, Lan Wen, and Soren Harnois-Leblanc. [Additional details and registration information are available here!](#)



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Associate Professor
Department of Population
Medicine
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care
Institute
&
Department of Epidemiology
T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Harvard University



Lan Wen
Assistant Professor
Department of Statistics and
Actuarial Science
University of Waterloo



Soren Harnois-Leblanc
Research Fellow
Department of Population Medicine
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute
&
Harvard Medical School

Nominate and Vote for Executive Committee Members!

Executive Committee Nominations due March 13, 2026

Nominations are being sought for President (2026-2029), Treasurer (2026-2029), one Member-at-Large (2026-2030), International Representative (2026-2029) and Trainee Representative (2026-2027). All terms will begin at the close of the June 2026 Annual Meeting. Members of SPER are encouraged to nominate themselves or any other member of SPER to run for these positions and help our Society achieve continued success through this opportunity for professional service.

The **President** will serve as President Elect (2026-2027), President (2027-2028), and Past President (2028-2029). The main duties of the President Elect are to help the President develop plans for the Annual Meeting, organize and develop the plans for the Virtual Meeting, and to chair the selection of the Student Prize Paper Award Recipient. The President designs the program for the Annual Meeting and is responsible for the Executive Committee's decision-making. The Past President chairs the selection of the Heinz Berendes International Travel Award recipient and provides input as needed.

The **Treasurer** is involved in all Executive Committee activities and is responsible for overseeing the Society's finances, including making purchases, approving expenses, and advising the Executive Committee on financial matters. This member will replace Candice Johnson.

The **Member-at-Large participates** in all Executive Committee activities. The Member-at-Large elected this cycle will be responsible for managing the Equity Advisory Board. This member will replace Stephanie Leonard.

The **Trainee Representative** participates in Executive Committee meetings, encourages and facilitates trainee participation in SPER and plans the Advanced Methods Workshop. Meeting and travel costs for the Annual Meeting will be covered for the Trainee Representative. This member will replace Xuanxuan Zhu.

The **International Representative** participates in all Executive Committee activities. This representative serves as a link between SPER and the pediatric and perinatal epidemiologic research communities outside of North America, with a goal of increasing SPER membership across the globe. To be eligible, the individual must reside full-time in a country outside North America. This member will replace Neda Razaz.

This call for nominations is posted on the SPER website ([SPER Call For Nominations](#)). Nominations will be solicited starting December 1st, 2025, and are **due by March 13, 2026**. Nominations should be submitted online through the SPER website. **Self-nominations are accepted.** Nominees will be asked to submit a 250-word candidate statement by the above deadline. The statement should highlight prior engagement in the Society. Please contact Stefanie Hinkle with any questions: stefanie.hinkle@penncmedicine.upenn.edu. The ballot will be presented to the SPER membership for electronic voting to take place in April 2026.

Join an SPER committee!

[SPER committee webpage](#)

Communications Committee

The purpose of the Communications Committee is to coordinate and enhance communications between the Society and membership. The committee has primary responsibility for the SPER newsletter, for SPER's communication via social media, and developing a communications plan.

[Join the communications committee here.](#)

Digital Engagement Committee (DEC)

The purpose of the Digital Engagement Committee is to help develop and oversee SPER online education initiatives, to include: online seminars, including joint SPER/SER presentations as well as other webinars, and other posted material such as SPER playlists.

[Join the digital engagement committee page here.](#)

Outreach Committee

The purpose of the Outreach Committee is to promote awareness and accessibility of the Society to help grow the membership. The Committee has responsibility for overseeing initiatives aimed at recruitment of new members and retention of existing members and expanding the Society's reach.

[Contact or join the outreach committee here.](#)

Student & Post-Doc Working Group

The mission of the Student, Trainee, & Post-Doc Working Group is to facilitate the educational experiences and professional development of trainees in pediatric and perinatal epidemiology-related disciplines by providing information, resources, and networking opportunities; facilitating trainee exchange of research ideas; planning the [Advanced Methods Workshop](#) and trainee events at the annual symposium; and promoting trainee engagement.

[Join the student and post-doc committee here.](#)

Equity Advisory Board

The Equity Advisory Board intersects with SPER programming and activities to promote equity both within the society and in perinatal, pediatric, and reproductive epidemiologic research. The board meets monthly and hosts an open listening session each year where any current or prospective SPER member can attend and discuss topics related to equity, and we plan for activities over the coming year.

[Join the Equity Advisory Board here.](#)

Follow SPER on Social Media!

SPER is currently active on [LinkedIn](#), [Bluesky](#) and [Facebook](#), connect with us for society updates and information!



SPER Communications



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Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your SPER membership for 2026! Benefits include discounted registration rates for the annual meeting; opportunities to serve on committees, review abstracts and be a poster judge; access to the online jobs and fellowships board; participation in the electronic mailing list; subscription to *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* – and more! If you would like to join SPER (or know a colleague who does), [click here to complete the membership application](#).

Remember that SPER memberships run from January 1st to December 31st (no matter when you renew) so please renew early for more SPER value!

Give to SPER

Fund the future and support our mission to foster pediatric and perinatal epidemiologic research! Donated funds will be used to support our annual meeting, student travel awards and memberships, and expanded programming throughout the year.

SPER is a Non-Profit 501c(3) organization, so your donations may be tax deductible.

[Donate to SPER here!](#)

Sponsor the SPER Annual Meeting

Support SPER and promote your organization! Sponsorships are available at the Full (\$750) and Email (\$350) levels. Full Annual Meeting Sponsorship gives organizations broad, year-long visibility through ads in the meeting program and SPER newsletters, plus inclusion in the email sponsorship option. Email Annual Meeting Sponsorship offers a lower-cost way to reach all SPER members with a clickable ad sent prior to the annual meeting. [Details on sponsoring the SPER annual meeting available here.](#)