Executive Committee (2026-2027)

President:
Sarka Lisonkova

Past-President:
Dawn Misra

President-Elect:
Karen C. Schliep

Secretary:
Stefania Papatheodorou

Treasurer:
Marina Oktapodas Feiler

Members-at-Large:
Stefanie Hinkle
Ugochi Vivian Ukah
Andrew Williams
Kari Weber

International Representative:
Rima Kaddoura

Trainee Representative:
Sabrina Chiodo

SPER Newsletter - Fall 2026

President's Corner

"There is no knowledge that is not power."
— Ralph Waldo Emerson (and, perhaps more memorably, *Mortal Kombat*)



It was wonderful to see so many of you in Phoenix at our 2026 Annual Meeting. I came away inspired by the quality of the presentations and discussions, and especially by the engagement of our students and early-career investigators. Professor Hernandez-Diaz's keynote was a particular highlight, as were the symposia, which brought together different perspectives on important questions in perinatal and pediatric epidemiology.

The meeting also made me think about some broader questions: why we do research, and how the evidence we generate becomes knowledge. And, in this age of misinformation, what exactly do we mean by knowledge? As the late and distinguished epidemiologist Professor Miettinen argued, scientific knowledge is not simply what one individual concludes; it emerges through evidence that has been examined and scrutinized – it is the intersubjective belief shared among experts.[1]

Research, however, does not occur independently of the society that supports it. Governments establish research priorities, philanthropic organizations invest in causes they consider important, industry supports research related to its interests, and the publication process influences which findings become part of the scientific record. These choices inevitably influence the reported evidence and consequently the knowledge we produce. We have long recognized the potential for commercial interests to influence science and have developed safeguards in response: disclosure of conflicts of interest, trial registration, etc. But commercial interests are not the only potential source of influence. Broader political and societal pressures may also influence which questions are asked, which studies are funded, and which findings are published. This raises an important distinction between setting research priorities and influencing the scientific process itself. Perhaps we need to think more broadly about how scientific independence can be protected from other sources of influence as well.

While our research questions may ultimately be shaped by societal pressures, our methods and conclusions must be determined by scientific principles and the evidence, including when the evidence is unexpected or inconsistent with prevailing political and societal views. Scientific rigor does not require conformity. Confidence in science depends not only on communicating scientific findings, but also on confidence in the process by which evidence becomes knowledge. The latter implies the freedom to raise questions freely, challenge assumptions, scrutinize results, and report and discuss findings without fear or favor.

This makes scientific societies such as SPER more important than ever before, as they provide a space where evidence can be examined critically and openly, while upholding methodological rigor and keeping sight of why we do research in the first place: to create knowledge that ultimately improves the health and care of mothers, children, and families.

As we begin planning our next Annual Meeting in Detroit, it is my hope that SPER will continue to be a place where evidence is discussed, and knowledge is synthesized and shared. We need to take our role as creators of evidence and curators of knowledge in perinatal and pediatric epidemiology very seriously. After all, there is no knowledge that is not power.

Sincerely,

Sarka Lisonkova

SPER President

---

1) Miettinen OS. The modern scientific physician: 2. Medical science versus scientific medicine. CMAJ. 2001 Sep 4;165(5):591-2. PMID: 11563211; PMCID: PMC81417.

SPER Newsletter Contents

President's Corner 1
40th SPER Annual Meeting 4
Nominate and Vote for Executive Committee Members 5
39th SPER Annual Meeting Highlights 6
2026 SPER Award Recipients 7
2026 Student/Trainee Poster Award Winners 9
Annual Meeting Quick Stats 10
Upcoming Events 11
Join an SPER committee 12
Follow SPER on Social Media 13
Membership Renewal 13
Give to SPER 13
Sponsor the SPER Annual Meeting 13

40th SPER Annual Meeting

June 14-15, 2027 – Detroit, MI

Submission Deadlines

Symposium: October 28, 2026

Abstracts: January 28, 2027

All Award Nominations: February 3, 2027

Submission Details: https://sper.org/annual-meeting-2/

Nominate and Vote for Executive Committee Members!

Executive Committee Nominations due Friday, March 12, 2027

Nominations are being sought for President (2027-2030), one Member-at-Large (2027-2031), and Trainee Representative (2027-2028). All terms will begin at the close of the June 2027 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 (2027-2028), President (2028-2029), and Past President (2029-2030). 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 or 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 managing the Digital Engagement Committee and Elections. This member will replace Stefanie Hinkle.

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 Sabrina Chiodo.

Nominations will be solicited starting December 1st, 2026, and are **due by March 12, 2027**.

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@pennmedicine.upenn.edu. The slate of candidates and ballot will be presented to the SPER membership for electronic voting to take place in April 2027.

39th SPER Annual Meeting Highlights

June 22-23, 2026
Phoenix, AZ

Congratulations to the winners of the 2026 SPER awards!

Heinz Berendes Award



Laure Sillis
KU Leuven
Belgium

Paper: *Reliability of Self-Reported Maternal Health and Mother-Infant Outcome Data in Web-Based Questionnaires.*

Student Prize Paper



Chase Latour
Department of Epidemiology
School of Public Health,
Boston University, Boston, MA

Paper: *Comparative Effectiveness of initiating Nifedipine versus Labetalol in early Gestation for Chronic Hypertension in Pregnancy.*

2026 SPER Award Recipients

Rising Star Award



Yu-Han Chiu, ScD MPH
Brown University

Mentoring Award



Susan Carmichael, PhD MS
Stanford University

Travel Award to Promote Equity



Hiluf Ebuy Abraha
University of South Carolina

Travel Award to Promote Equity



Michelle Tam, PhD
Harvard University

Travel Award to Promote Equity



Elleni Hailu, PhD
Stanford University

Travel Award to Promote Equity



Andrea Chalem
University of North Carolina

2026 Student/Trainee Poster Award Winners

Session A

1st Place

Amelia Srajer, MD, MSc

OBGYN Resident Physician

University of Calgary

"Hospital costs of severe maternal morbidity across race/ethnicity and insurance status: a national serial cross-sectional study."

2nd Place

Gabrielle Johnson

PhD Student

UMass Amherst

"Using cycle-timed air pollutant estimates to model fecundability."

Session B

1 st Place

Natalie Boychuk

PhD student

Columbia University

"The Impact of NY Paid Family Leave on Postpartum A1C after Gestational Diabetes: A controlled interrupted time series analysis."

2nd Place

Da-Yea Song

PhD Student

Johns Hopkins University

"Developmental Heterogeneity in Infant Brain Development Associated with Prenatal and Early Life Lead Exposure."

Annual Meeting Quick Stats

- Submitted Abstracts:
  - 338 total submissions
  - 178 trainee submissions

- Advanced Methods Workshop:
  - 180 registrants

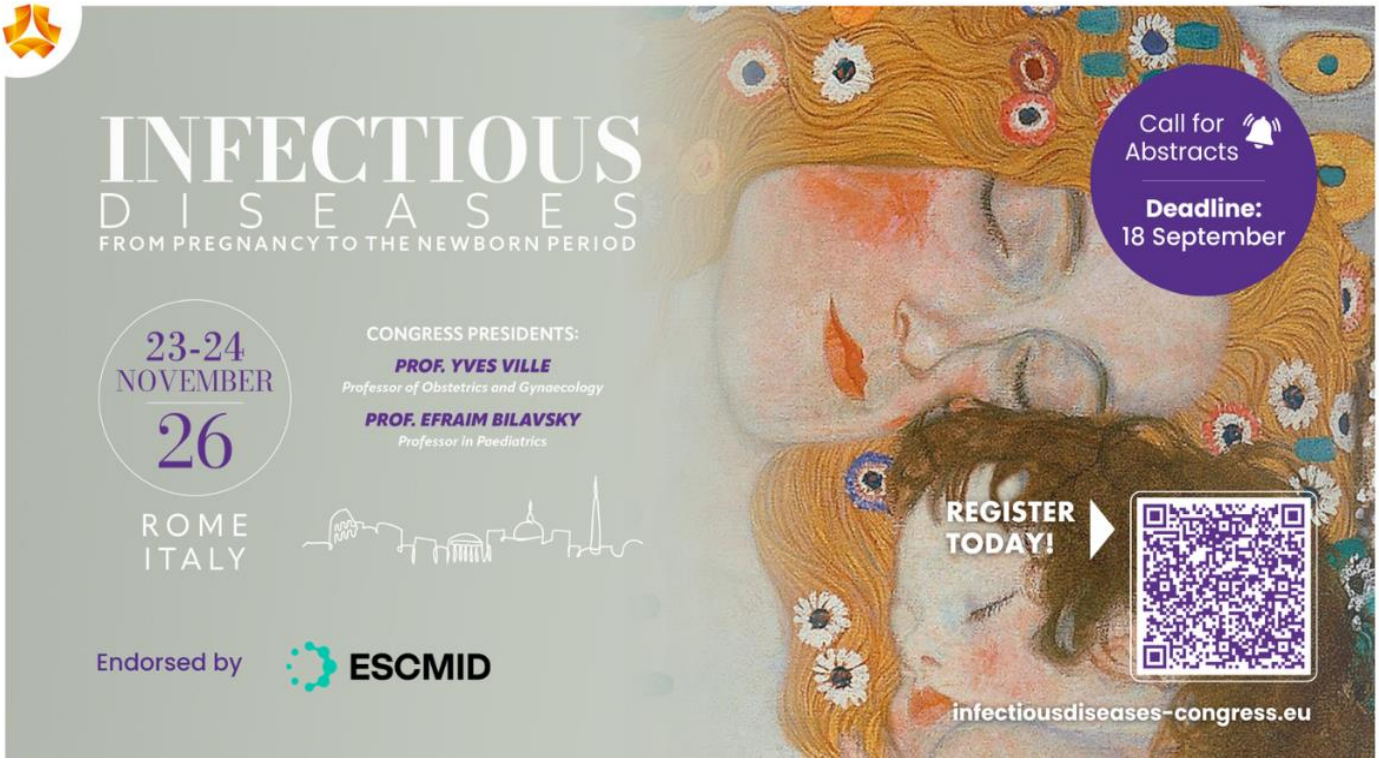
- Annual Meeting Program:
  - 3 Symposia -
    - 13 oral presentations
  - 6 concurrent contributed sessions
    - 29 oral presentations

- Annual Meeting Attendance:
  - 190 attendees
  - 46% trainees
  - 7% outside of US and Canada

- Membership:
  - 299 members
  - 45% trainees

Upcoming Events





Join an SPER committee!

SPER committee webpage

Program Committee

The Program Committee helps plan the annual meeting. Committee members identify topics for Concurrent Contributed Sessions and select presentations for these sessions from submitted abstracts. A call for volunteers will be announced in the coming weeks.

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 in SPER.

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**, follow/connect with us for society updates and information!

SPER Communications

@spercomms.bsky.social

Search: SPER

Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your SPER membership! 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.

Reminder that SPER memberships run from January 1st to December 31st (no matter when you renew), 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. Details on sponsoring the SPER annual meeting available here.