



SPA: Continuing to Strengthen Our Advocacy Efforts

Nina Deutsch, MD

Since its founding in 1986, the Society for Pediatric Anesthesia (SPA) has long been an advocate for its members and their pediatric patients. Through its education efforts, research grant awards, and professional development programs, SPA has supported a multifaceted approach to improve the perioperative care of children and infants. However, children today continue to face significant issues, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, school shootings, and limited or no access to appropriate medical care. With this in mind, SPA is actively working to expand its advocacy efforts even further to better serve our patients.

A new advocacy task force

SPA's mission is to advance the safety and quality of care for children. Events in the news demonstrate the issues that our patients face both with their medical care and in their schools. The SPA leadership has recognized that organizations such as ours must be at the forefront of advocacy efforts. Besides putting out a statement in response to an event, we need to also examine available science and evidence to determine what actions best serve our patients and their families. In some instances, we hope to empower and support our own members to work toward solutions that improve care. In others, we may be making a monetary donation to another organization that directly works in a specific area. These efforts will require a dedicated and diverse group of SPA members to come together to successfully achieve these goals. Therefore, SPA leadership has formed a task force to determine the structure and operation of this expanded advocacy arm of the society. We look forward to their upcoming recommendations and hope for future engagement of all SPA members.

Education

Our advocacy continues through our education efforts as well. At our twice-yearly meetings, SPA provides outstanding sessions that cover both medical knowledge and professional development through plenary lectures, workshops, and problem-



based learning roundtables. The topics are timely and relevant, providing attendees with the most up-to-date information available. Importantly, these meetings allow for networking and collaboration of its members. Following two years of virtual meetings, being able to gather again in person this spring in Tampa and again in October in New Orleans was a welcome return to normal.

SPA continues to provide several other educational resources through its website, including the Question of the Week, monthly polls on quality and safety, recorded lectures from past meetings, and Virtual Grand Rounds and Ask the Expert podcasts in collaboration with Open Anesthesia. SPA One-Pagers and the newly developed SPA Case Guides are other member-produced products that have been outstanding additions. The website also houses links to the SPA-developed Pedi Crisis App 2.0 and the Critical Events Checklist, two free resources designed to support clinician responses to pediatric perioperative life-threatening critical events. These apps have been downloaded by users around the world and feature diagnostic support, weight-based dosing, and other features.

Research

Research is another important area supporting SPA's advocacy efforts. Since 2015, SPA has awarded one or more Young Investigator Research Grants through its Patient Safety, Education, and Research Fund. Totaling up to \$100,000 annually, these funds support research through basic science or clinical projects, innovations in education, or quality and safety projects with the goal of improving the care of pediatric patients. SPA also has an active research committee that reviews and accepts research abstracts for the annual meeting as well as submitted membership surveys. Furthermore, several clinical registries are a part of SPA and continue to produce outstanding work in the areas of difficult airway management, care of patients with craniocynostosis, regional anesthetic techniques, and the anesthetic care and best practices for pediatric patients.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

SPA continues to be dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for our members as well as our patients. The SPA DEI Committee was formed in 2019, and their outreach has only con-



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tinued to grow. Currently, a member of this committee sits on all SPA standing committees to help ensure that DEI is at the forefront of all that we do as a society. The DEI committee is also spearheading several projects, including a multicenter study looking at health care disparities among pediatric patients and an education curriculum that addresses culturally competent perioperative care. All SPA surveys are being evaluated by the DEI Committee to confirm that they address DEI issues appropriately, and SPA has committed to having a DEI-related topic and workshop at every meeting going forward. Finally, the DEI Committee launched a mentorship program for underrepresented minority members. Another SPA product is the Women's Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (WELI). Started in 2018, WELI provides resources, including protégé-advisor dyads, informative workshops, networking sessions, and speaking opportunities, that empower its highly productive women pediatric anesthesiologists to ultimately achieve equity, promotion, and leadership.

Continuing our mission

SPA's mission is to "advance the safety and quality of anesthesia care, perioperative care, and pain management in children by educating clinicians, supporting research, and fostering collaboration among clinicians, patient families, and professional organizations worldwide." During my two years as SPA President, and now as Immediate Past President, I have never been more honored to be a part of this organization as I look forward to our continued and expanding advocacy efforts, knowing that we can make a difference in the lives of our patients and their families. ■