



# 2021 Summer Newsletter

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## Editor's Note

Amid the summer doldrums comes this edition of the SPP Newsletter. Included among the usual array of Committee reports is an interview with our current President, Dr. Debra Heller, who reminds me of the diversity of ways that we come into pediatric pathology. Debra's path followed OB/GYN, whereas mine followed oncological pathology. Others have worked in dentistry, nursing, forensic medicine, and other diverse fields before landing on pediatric pathology as a career, and the reputation of our subspecialty as the last of the generalists means that it can attract talent from a wide array of sources.

Similar to Dr. Heller, another lesson that I personally learned is the areas of special responsibility can change with each new job, while still carrying the title of Pediatric Pathology. During my career, my main job focus changed from oncology to laboratory medicine to perinatal pathology to education, so it pays to be flexible.

Another feature of Dr. Heller's interview that struck me was our shared experience with Dr. Renate Dische as a mentor in pediatric pathology. She was truly a great lady and career inspiration, and I know that others of you were also touched by her.

Also included in the current newsletter is a lookback at the SPP Newsletter from 25 years ago, when then President John Buchino extolled the creation of the Founders' Endowment for Research in Pediatric Pathology, formed to generate a corpus that would pay sufficient interest to fund our annual Young Investigator Award. All SPP awards were eventually combined into one Restricted Fund that had grown to \$615,249 in April 2021. For accounting purposes, the proceeds from this fund (dividends, capital gains) have been used to fund a "New Fund" that had \$138,999 in April 2021, and the "Old Fund" will be spend down on future awards. In short, the visionaries who founded this and other funds have been successful, and we are now contemplating adding

more awards or increasing the award amount. We also owe a debt of gratitude to those who have contributed to these awards – Thank You!

Regretfully, coronavirus is still with us in the form of the Delta variant, leading us to cancel the live meeting in Portland, scheduled for October. This will be replaced by another virtual event, and I encourage everyone to register for it. In the morning briefing words of the Police Sergeant from the TV show Hill Street Blues, “Be careful out there!”



**David Parham**  
Newsletter Editor

## Interview with the President



Interview with Debra Heller, MD  
SPP President and Professor of Pathology, Immunology, and Laboratory Medicine  
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, NJ

Conducted by David Parham, MD, Newsletter Editor, July 28, 2021

*Debra, thanks for talking with me today. First, tell me about your early life.*

I was born in New York City, moved to Pittsburgh at ages 3-7, then moved back to NYC. I attended high school at Hunter College High School on the East Side of NYC, and then I went to college at Queens College, which is part of City University of New York. I was the first physician in my family. At that time, my schooling was very achievement-oriented, with the belief that girls could grow up to be anything they wanted.

*Were there any early events that influenced your career decision?*

I dissected my first frog in the ninth grade and came home very excited, telling my family all about it. My sister was not impressed, saying that I was “being disgusting again”, but I was fascinated and made up my mind to become a doctor.

*Where did you attend medical school? Did anyone inspire you during that time?*

I attended New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY, with clinical rotations throughout Manhattan. I did not take pathology as a discipline; the only exposure being lectures, so I had no mentors in it.

*After you completed medical school, you pursued a rather circuitous route to pathology. Tell me about it.*

I initially chose obstetrics and gynecology as a career path, completing my residency at Beth Israel Medical Center and then afterwards practicing for 3 1/2 years. I loved the specialty (and still do) but hated things that went with it, such as malpractice worries, keeping an office, and having long hours.

*What then influenced you to go into pathology?*

A 3-month rotation in pathology was part of my OB-GYN residency, and I enjoyed it. My attendings in pathology wanted me to switch career paths, but I was determined to finish OB-GYN. Then, after finding myself unhappy in practice, I went to my OB-GYN Chairman, Dr. Robert Wallach, who reminded me of my interest in pathology and thought it would be a better fit for me. At that point, I started an anatomic pathology residency at Mt. Sinai in NY, with a subspecialty interest in GYN pathology.

*At what point did you then become interested in pediatric pathology?*

When I started at Mt. Sinai, I was unaware of pediatric pathology, but during my second year, Dr. Renate Dische needed a fellow, and I was asked to join her program as part of my residency. Dr. Dische exerted a huge influence on my eventual career path, but after residency I became the first GYN pathology fellow at Mt. Sinai. When that was completed, I became a GYN pathology attending at Mt. Sinai. During this time, I also met Ona Faye-Petersen, who was Dr. Dische's fellow immediately before I was. Dr. Dische sent me for rotations at the AFIP, and I met Drs. Tim Triche and Virginia Anderson while I was on that rotation.

*And how did this lead to your work in perinatal pathology?*

After 2 years at Mt. Sinai, I moved my practice to Columbia, where I became the head of the Autopsy service and continued to work in GYN pathology. Dr. Dische was working part-time at Columbia at that time, so ironically I became her "boss". In truth, she still bossed me around (she was a character!). During the last years of her career, she mainly worked on congenital heart disease and heart dissection. Otherwise, I performed the perinatal autopsies, and I didn't start working in placentas until after Dr. Mary Elizabeth King retired. She only worked two days a week but on average signed out 100 placentas during that time.

*What is your past experience in the SPP?*

Dr. Dische encouraged me to join the SPP when I was a fellow. I found it to be a welcoming group, so that I have attended almost all meetings since that time. I have been the Chair of the Practice Committee and the Perinatal Committee, and I have served on Council and the Board of Directors.

*What challenges do you see for the future of the SPP and for pediatric pathology in general?*

I think that attracting new members and practitioners is our greatest challenge. Exposing students to pediatric pathology during training and encouraging trainees to consider its advantages (such as the availability of jobs and fellowships) are keys to success. Opportunities for perinatal pathology are a little easier in general pathology, where a subspecialist to handle placentas and perinatal autopsies is needed. A pathologist is particularly attractive to a general hospital if they do perinatal pathology and additionally some other aspect of anatomic pathology. Pathologists who focus on pediatric surgical pathology are more likely to be needed in specialty pediatric hospitals, or general hospitals with a busy pediatric surgical service.

*What would you like to get accomplished during your year as SPP President?*

I have three goals. First, I want to continue to see the virtual meetings accomplished in the short term. Second, I want to determine how the best way to conduct future meetings is in the long term. A task force has been convened to work on this objective, but no definitive suggestions have appeared thus far. Finally, I want to make sure that the transition to new management (AOE Consulting) is successful. This has gone well so far. I have had the privilege of seeing close up that the success of the Society is in the participation of a large number of its members, not just the input of a single individual.

## SPP History – This Time 25 Years Ago

From the Summer 1966 Newsletter:

In his President's Message, John Buchino called attention to the creation of the Founders' Endowment for Research in Pediatric Pathology (FERPP). This was created to generate sufficient interest to fund the Young Investigator Award. He estimated a corpus of \$200,000 to \$250,000, which at first blush seemed unrealistic, but he noted that \$50,000 had already been raised. The Young Investigator Award was lauded for its productivity in producing peer-reviewed publications and independent funding. Suggestions for "pain-free" giving included increasing legal fees and donating them, donating royalty checks and honoraria, donating stock with increased value and potential capital gains, and remembering the Society in your will. [Editor's note: The SPP is a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization. As of April 30, there was \$615,249 in the Past Restricted Award Fund (the "Old" Fund), and it had generated \$138,999 for the Restricted Award Fund (the "New" Fund, a recent addition to our portfolio). As per our auditors' advice, the "Old Fund" will be used to fund future awards and honoraria, with interest and capital gains being accrued in the "New Fund"].

## Important Items



### Reminders

- Save the date: Fall Meeting
  - October 8-9, 2021, Virtual
  - The deadline for abstract submission has now passed.
  - [Registration](#) is now open!
- Slide Survey 2021
  - [Register](#) at any time for access to all three Case Sets! The first two Case Sets are now available, and the third Case Set will be released in October.

### New SPP Website

- The [new website](#) and membership database are now fully functional. Make sure to check the "Featured News and Announcements" section regularly for important SPP updates.
- Navigation Tips
  - The first time you [log in](#), you will need to select "Reset Password" to set a new password.
  - Under My Profile, ensure to review your information and update it as needed.

## Committee Reports



### Education Committee

#### Highlights from Last Quarter

- The 2021 Perinatal Pathology Course occurred April 8 – 11 and was well received.
- The SPP submitted materials for Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) reaccreditation. This included a narrative Self Study Report as well as Performance-in-Practice evidence for 11 past accredited CE activities. The Accreditation Interview will occur in November 2021 with the final decision communicated in March 2022.
- The SPP is currently updating Accredited CE Policies and Procedures to align with the new ACCME *Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited CE*.

#### Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives

- The 2021 Fall Annual Meeting will be fully virtually this year. Planning is underway with registration to launch in August. New this year, the Perinatal Slide Session will be accredited for CME credit.
- The 2021 Slide Survey Online will be launching soon with Case Set 1 and Case Set 2 released concurrently [Ed. Note: this has been accomplished – see heading above].



Sanda Alexandrescu, MD  
Chair, Education Committee

### Fellowship Committee

#### Highlights from Last Quarter

- Dr. Amer Heider took over as Chair of the Fellowship Committee, following the SPP's Spring 2021 Meeting.
- The ABPath conducted a questionnaire for the diplomats and fellows, in order to better understand the training variations and current practice. The SPP Fellowship Committee compiled a list of questions that they would like added to the questionnaire, submitted mid-May.

#### Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives

- The Fellowship Committee will compile a list of 2021 fellows. The list will be used as the listserv for the "Call for Committee Interest" e-mail blast, in order to solicit interest in fellows to join SPP Committees.



Amer Heider, MD  
Chair, Fellowship Committee

## **Membership Committee**

### **Highlights from Last Quarter**

- Current initiatives paused during transition to AOE Consulting.

### **Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives**

- The Membership Committee will reimplement regularly scheduled meetings in the fall to advance the Membership Action Plan focusing on recruitment, retention, and recognition of Society members.
- With input from the Informatics and Communication Committee, a communication timeline will be developed to assist in keeping membership apprised of the standard happenings of the Society.



Erin Rudzinski, MD  
Chair, Membership Committee

## **Perinatal Committee**

### **Highlights from Last Quarter**

- The Perinatal Committee met on March 11, 2021 and discussed the following:
  - Upcoming Perinatal Symposium proposals for 2021 – 2023.
  - 2021 Perinatal Pathology Course
  - Placental Triage publication being developed by Dr. Drucilla Roberts.
  - Potential forum for case discussions.

### **Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives**

- The Perinatal Symposium originally planned by Dr. Terry Morgan for the 2021 Fall Annual Meeting will be postponed to 2023 in light of the virtual meeting format.
- This year the Perinatal Slide Session will be accredited for CME credit. The call for cases will be sent out soon. [Ed. Note: the call for cases has now gone out]



Eumenia Castro, MD, PhD  
Chair, Perinatal Committee

## **Publications Committee**

### **Highlights from Last Quarter**

- PDP is up for renewal with the publisher, SAGE. The renewal letter from SAGE was reviewed and a counter proposal is in the process of submission from the SPP.
- The Society and the Publications Committee celebrate the 1.25 impact factor of PDP – congratulations to the Editor-in-Chief, editors and authors!

## Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives

- The renewal of PDP with SAGE will likely result in publication of online-only editions, moving forward from the end of 2021.



Monique De Paepe, MD  
Chair, Publications Committee

## Research & Awards Committee

### Highlights from Last Quarter

Congratulations to the following award recipients presented at the 2021 SPP Spring Meeting:

- Spring 2021 Awards:
  - The Gordon F. Vawter Pathologist-in-Training Award recognizes the meritorious work of medical students, residents and fellows.
    - Sami Bannoura, MD Hospital for Sick Children
    - *Pediatric PLAG1-rearranged Fibroblastic/Fibromyxoid Tumors: A Novel Entity or Morphologic Spectrum of Lipoblastoma*
  - The Harry B. Neustein Award recognizes abstracts presenting meritorious work involving electron microscopy in the study of disorders of children.
    - Siddhartha Sen, MD, PhD Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital
    - *High-Depth Tissue-Based Testing for Molecular Diagnosis of Disorders of Somatic Mosaicism*
  - The Benirschke Perinatal Pathology Award recognizes the best presentation that advances the field of perinatal pathology.
    - Jim Wright, MD, PhD University of Calgary
    - *Characterization of vitelline vessel remnant (VVR) circulation in the umbilical cord and documentation that VVR-derived funisitis is a sensitive and specific predictor of histological evidence of amniotic fluid infection.*
  - The Lotte Strauss Prize recognizes the meritorious work by an individual 40 years of age or younger in a subject germane to pediatric pathology, published or accepted for publication.
    - Nya Nelson, MD, PhD
    - *Mucinous Cell Clusters in Infantile Congenital Pulmonary Airway Malformations Mimic Adult Mucinous Adenocarcinoma But Are Not Associated With Poor Outcomes When Appropriately Resected* Am J Surg Pathol. 2020 Aug;44(8):1118-1129
  - The Enid Gilbert Barness Prize recognizes the impact of an outstanding pediatric pathology paper on anatomic pathology, clinical practice, research or public health and to encourage excellence and relevance in pediatric pathology practice.
    - Shengmei Zhou, MD Children's Hospital Los Angeles
    - *Clinicopathologic Characteristics of Late Acute Antibody-Mediated Rejection in Pediatric Liver Transplantation. Transplantation.*
- Distinguished Colleague Awards:
  - Linda Ernst, MD, MHS, for her many contributions to the SPP and her leadership as treasurer during the challenges of COVID.
  - Jason Jarzembowski, MD, PhD, for his many years of contribution to the SPP and his steadfast leadership in developing the first virtual meeting during the challenges of COVID.

- Cheryl Coffin, MD, for decades of service to the SPP and her seminal contributions to diagnostic and academic pediatric soft tissue pathology.

### Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives

- The 2021 Fall Meeting Abstract Submission Site launched July 14, 2021. Deadline for submission is August 9, 2021 [Ed. Note: abstract submission is now closed.]



Jefferson Terry, MD, PhD  
Chair, Research & Awards Committee

### Informatics & Communication Committee

#### Highlights from Last Quarter

- The new SPP website and membership management system was implemented. Overall, it was a smooth transition, and ongoing improvements are being made.
- The 2021 Winter/Spring SPP Newsletter was distributed and posted to the website. Newsletters will be released quarterly moving forward.

#### Announcements and Upcoming Initiatives

- AOE is working to compile and upload archival documents. Dr. Sonja Chen, Archives Director, will be heading up this project along with several I&C members [Ed. Note: archiving of many old newsletters has been accomplished and can now be viewed on the website].
- We continue to maintain an active social media presence on Twitter ([@SocPediPath](https://twitter.com/SocPediPath)) and via the pediatric pathology forum. Dr. Michael Arnold, Social Media Director, is leading this work.
- Committee members will assist with the upcoming Virtual Fall Meeting.



Jason Jarzembowski, MD, PhD  
Chair, Informatics & Communication Committee

### Upcoming Meetings of Interest

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Meeting Dates and Location</i>
University of Chicago 38 <sup>th</sup> Conference on Pediatric Disease Update on Pediatric Pathology	August 2021 – <i>Exact dates and location TBD</i>
USCAP Annual Meeting	March 19-24, 2022 – <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>
Paediatric Pathology Society Annual Meeting	September 30-October 1, 2021 – <i>online</i>
International Paediatric Pathology Association (IPPA) Advanced Course	May 7-13, 2022 – <i>Egmond aan Zee, Netherlands</i>



## SPP Organization

### **Society for Pediatric Pathology**

8156 S Wadsworth Blvd., Unit E #177  
Littleton, CO 80128  
Phone: 720-625-8271  
E-mail: [spp@aoeconsulting.com](mailto:spp@aoeconsulting.com)

### Board of Directors

Jim Wright, MD, PhD  
Sanda Alexandrescu, MD  
Raffaella Morotti, MD  
Vivekanand Singh, MD  
Nina Tatevian, MD  
Bruce Pawel, MD  
Lisa Teot, MD  
Sara Vargas, MD  
Fusun Gundogan, MD  
Kyle Kurek, MD  
Jason Jarzembowski, MD, PhD

### Official Journal

*Pediatric and Developmental Pathology*  
Editor: Pierre Russo, MD

### Newsletter Editorial Team

Dr. David Parham, Editor-in-Chief  
Dr. Jason Jarzembowski, Chair of Informatics &  
Communication Committee  
Bonnie Doman, Project Coordinator, AOE Consulting

### Officers

President: Debra Heller, MD  
President-Elect: Laura Finn, MD  
Past-President: Gino Somers, MBBS, PhD, FRCPA  
Secretary: M. Cristina Pacheco, MD  
Treasurer: Chandra Krishnan, MD

### Committee Chairs

Education Committee: Sanda Alexandrescu, MD  
Workshop Subcommittee: Jessica Davis, MD  
Symposium Subcommittee: Jiancong Liang, MD, PhD  
Slide Survey Subcommittee: Bradford Siegele, MD, JD  
Fellowship Committee: Amer Heider, MD  
Finance Committee: Jennifer Black, MD  
Informatics & Communication Committee: Jason  
Jarzembowski, MD, PhD  
Membership Committee: Erin Rudzinski, MD  
Perinatal Committee: Eumenia Castro, MD, PhD  
Practice Committee: Dolores Lopez-Terrada, MD, PhD  
Publications Committee: Monique De Paepe, MD  
Research & Awards Committee: Jefferson Terry, MD, PhD