Commentary: Perspectives on Funding Community Pediatrics

Bill Isler

The 5 panelists on the funders’ session, “Show Me the Money” (Part 2): Private and Public Foundations,” at the July 2004 American Academy of Pediatrics Community Access to Child Health and Medical Home National Conference could have changed the title of the session from “Show Me the Money” to “Show Me the Project, Passion, Your Partnerships, and Existing Relationships With the Community, Data, Logic of Your Model, and Sustainability of Your Proposed Project.” They emphasized that funding for community-pediatrics issues can be obtained for a project that is carefully planned and meets a funder’s priorities. What the panelists were able to do by responding to 5 predetermined questions and additional questions from the audience was reinforce the concept of knowing what you want to do, why it is important for the people you wish to serve, and why the foundation to which you will be submitting your request for funding is the appropriate foundation to consider and ultimately fund your proposal.

Panelists included representatives from private foundations, the United Way, and the federal government. All of the panelists suggested that knowing foundation funding guidelines by reviewing their Web sites, learning about projects that they have funded in the past, and requesting a presubmission meeting to discuss the proposal are necessary steps to secure support and ensure funding.

Future trends for child health funding include programs that focus on preventive mental health, children without health insurance, childhood obesity, family and community violence, and connecting children’s programs to child development and schools. These are all issues related to the “millennial morbidity.”1 Therefore, the other articles in this supplement discussing community-pediatrics research and service2,3 may be of particular interest to those seeking funding.

There is no way to guarantee funding, but a proposal that is based on community needs and is consistent with foundation goals and objectives is a realistic way to begin a discussion with potential funders. An important recommendation to participants was to replicate a funders’ panel such as this one in their own communities. They were encouraged to involve local grant makers, including private and public funding partners.

Being better connected with funders will improve chances of receiving grant money for specific programs. In addition, it can allow pediatricians to play a role in the determination of funding priorities. Pediatricians and other health care professionals are encouraged to offer their knowledge, skills, and experiences to funders by serving on funding panels, advisory committees, community-based needs-assessment task forces, and the boards of foundations and other nonprofit organizations. These agencies are often eager for input from pediatricians while understanding that the amount of time doctors can commit to volunteer activities may be limited. It is important, therefore, within the limits of what is reasonable for each individual, to make yourself available to the community in any way that would support comprehensive programs for children and their families.

REFERENCES

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