

Taking the Pulse of *Pediatrics*

“How are you—and how are things going?” These are words spoken each and every day by us as pediatricians to parents and our young patients. We listen to what our patients tell us about their state of well-being and then work with them to make a plan to improve their overall health. In almost all cases, we maintain a state of optimism and encourage our patients and their families to feel likewise, no matter how dire the situation.

Now let's try this analogy again—but with the field of pediatrics being our patient. How is our profession faring? If you open a newspaper or watch television, you might say “not so well.” You may find yourself bemoaning children's access to health care and the difficulty of establishing medical homes, the ever-decreasing ability of families to afford health care for their children, the concern that pediatric practices may not stay viable given ever-decreasing reimbursements, or even just the public's suspicion of our standards of care—especially with declines in receptivity by some parents to vaccinate their children. We were struck by the pessimism of many of our colleagues at the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP's) National Conference and Exhibition this past October, not just about the future of our own practice, but also about whether the current environment will attract future medical students to consider a career in pediatrics. It seems that we are less optimistic about our own futures than those of our patients.

Well, stop the presses—or better yet—keep them rolling! If you are a regular reader of our journal, we think you can see the proverbial cup of pediatric wellness as one that is not only half-full but getting fuller with each issue of *Pediatrics*. We strongly believe that there has never been a better time to celebrate being a pediatrician or, better yet, to celebrate the field of pediatrics. We see this day in and day out in the manuscripts we receive at this journal with new scientific discoveries, new ideas, and lots of new evidence that will improve how we care for children. Combine the articles in our journal with the policy work of the AAP in achieving its mission to attain optimal health and well-being for all children; who wouldn't want to be a pediatrician?

That being said, we know that we can always improve how we provide care to children and families, and we can also improve how we provide new knowledge to you through the journal. With the start of a new year and a new volume of *Pediatrics*, we want to highlight some additions and changes that we think will further enhance our mission of improving our practice, and, in turn, health outcomes for the children we serve—locally, nationally, and internationally.

First, beginning in this issue, we launch a new addition to our rotating Perspectives Columns—a quarterly article on global health, under the editorship of former AAP President and member of the Standing Committee of the International Pediatric Association, Dr Jay Berkelhamer. The first submission, by Cabral et al,¹ provides a nice overview on why we believe a column on global health issues is important. It contains lots of

AUTHORS: Lewis R. First, MD, MS,^a Virginia A. Moyer, MD, MPH,^b Alain D. Park,^c and Joseph Puskarz^d

^aDepartment of Pediatrics, University of Vermont College of Medicine, Burlington, Vermont; ^bDepartment of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas; and ^cManaging Editor; and ^dSenior Managing Editor, Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, Illinois

ABBREVIATION

AAP—American Academy of Pediatrics

Opinions expressed in these commentaries are those of the author and not necessarily those of the American Academy of Pediatrics or its Committees.

www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2011-3288

doi:10.1542/peds.2011-3288

Accepted for publication Nov 3, 2011

Address correspondence to Lewis R. First, MD, MS, Department of Pediatrics, University of Vermont College of Medicine, Burlington, VT 05405. E-mail: lewis.first@uvm.edu

PEDIATRICS (ISSN Numbers: Print, 0031-4005; Online, 1098-4275).

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FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: *The authors have indicated they have no financial relationships relevant to this article to disclose.*

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useful information on how children are faring worldwide. In addition, we are seeing an uptick in Quality Reports, as more and more of our readers are sharing how they have been able to improve care for children—with insights into how you can do the same for your own practice setting.

Most important, we plan to keep the content of our journal as vibrant and fresh as possible. We are proud that we are able to get an accepted article into online early release within no more than 3 months from final acceptance, and that our “impact factor,” a measure of how often articles in our journal are cited, shot up to a new high; the most recent *Journal Citation Reports* (2010) ranked *Pediatrics* as the most cited pediatric journal in the world both for 1 year and 5 years in aggregate. In addition, this past year, the national media paid more attention to our studies than ever before, and in doing so, elevated the importance of pediatrics and pediatricians even more in the public eye.

As we start 2012, and welcome the more than 6 million annual visitors to our journal's Web site, we remind our readers that the online version, not the shorter print edition, is the official

journal of record. Is it time to do away with the print version? Probably not just yet, but it may not be long until we are heading in that direction. We do believe that our Web site and new digital products are taking us effectively into the future of medical publishing. If you haven't tried the Digital Abstracts Edition of the journal (containing abstracts of all articles, print and online, plus full-text commentaries and policies), or its free App version for the iPad, iPhone, and Android, or even our e-book versions of the journal (currently for the Kindle but soon to be accessible through the iBook platform from Apple), we encourage you to try any or all of them; tens of thousands of readers already have.

If you are thinking, “there are so many options to peruse and so little time!” you will find some highlights of each issue in our blog—*First Read*—which contains previews of articles of interest selected by members of our executive editorial board. We are even running some of our most interesting “fillers” from the print journal in the blog so they are not missed by our online readers.

A visit to our Web site will allow you to sample our electronic letters (posted often a day after an article is published). We have increased the readability of our online edition with expandable columns, pop-up abstracts and references, and a layout designed for much easier online reading.

Finally, coming in late fall 2012, plans are set to launch the AAP Journals and Publications Portal. The Portal will provide a single point of access for AAP scholarly content and will allow members to fully customize their experience based on their personal preferences and individual needs.

So, as we greet the new year, rather than bemoan a pessimistic future for our profession, we recommend a monthly dose of *Pediatrics* so we can appropriately answer the question, “How are we doing?” in the most informative and optimistic manner possible. Here's to another great year of our journal and—most important—to continuing the work of the AAP, *Pediatrics*, and all of us who continue to strive to do whatever it takes to improve the health of children!

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Pediatrics 2012;129;168

DOI: 10.1542/peds.2011-3288 originally published online December 19, 2011;

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PEDIATRICS®

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

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The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/1/168>

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