

# Pediatrics

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VOLUME 26

NOVEMBER 1960

NUMBER 5

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## AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

#### COMMUNICATION

TODAY we live in an era of unprecedented means of communication, but perhaps never before has it been so difficult to achieve understanding and exchange of ideas and real communion, which is the purpose of communication. One difficulty may be that there are too many "voices" seeking to attract our attention. I hesitate to add mine to the "shouting and the tumult." I offer you then, this President's Message with apology and explanation.

The Academy has become a large organization of over 5,500 members in North America and more than 1,000 in Latin America. In June 1931, it was possible to get the original membership of the Academy in a group photograph which hangs in the Academy headquarters in Evanston. Communication then was easy. Today the Annual Meeting attracts a substantial part of our membership—about 1,500. Unfortunately, in recent years there has been usually only a corporal's guard present at the business meeting by comparison with the attendance at clinical sessions. And many Fellows do not get to our meetings. An organization quickly loses its sense of purpose and vitality unless communication between its leadership and members is actively maintained. I don't mean to suggest that our "communications" concerning Academy business are not good. The *News Letter*

serves a very important purpose in this respect and it will become even better. District Chairmen are the main line of communication between the Board and the Fellows and some District Chairmen have done a tremendous job on this by attending State Chapter meetings, holding District meetings, and otherwise keeping in close touch with Fellows in their Districts. Some State Chapters have established their own publications to facilitate communication on Academy matters. The Presidential Address of the retiring President has always been the most important statement of Academy hopes and ambitions, usually prepared and delivered in the light of a number of years' experience at the policy-making level of the Academy. These Presidential Addresses are valuable documents which collectively constitute a history of the Academy. But I believe a lot of their impact on our members and our program is lost because these are the thoughts of out-going Presidents. We need continuity in the Presidential line of communication.

This President's Message therefore is an effort to add the "missing link" to our Academy chain of communication. I will try to convey briefly each month my thoughts on some of our problems, report on projects under way and comment on other affairs of the Academy—all of which could be done

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much more easily and effectively if we were able to sit around a table together and talk things over.

As President-elect I had the privilege last summer of visiting a number of our chapters in Latin America as well as our chapter in Puerto Rico. I was impressed with the high caliber of the members we have in all the places I visited. It shows that the Country chairmen and the District chairmen in Latin America have used excellent judgment in recommending Latin American pediatricians for membership in the Academy. I could not help but think as I visited in major cities in South America and flew over the vast countries, and read and talked with people about conditions in these great lands, that the opportunities for future growth and development in many fields are tremendous. In child health, for example, while there are great problems, these are not unlike the problems which have been faced and solved in the United States and elsewhere. Many of the great

names in U. S. pediatrics—Holt, Van Ingen and Jacobi—come to mind, who have given active leadership and lent their wisdom and prestige to public movements, such as the control of childhood tuberculosis and the reduction of infant mortality. From the papers presented and the discussion at the Brazilian Pediatric Congress in Rio and the Pan-American Congress in Caracas, it is evident that Academy leaders in South America are alive to the opportunities to contribute to the welfare of all children in their nations. This is in keeping with the traditions of the Academy and its primary objective.

This leadership role is a vital part of our specialty. It is a great heritage. Each of us has a responsibility to give something to pediatrics in return for the contribution those who have gone before us have made to it, but that's a topic for another Message!

*George M. Wheatley.*

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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

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