Don't underestimate the value of 'FAAP'

from the AAP Committee on Membership

Editor's note: For Your Benefit is a new monthly column, written by the AAP Committee on Membership highlighting the value of AAP membership and providing tips on how to make the most of your membership and member benefits.

The Academy prides itself on offering an opportunity for members to become involved at all phases of their professional career—from medical students, to residents, to young pediatricians and beyond. Whether you are a pediatrician, medical subspecialist or surgical specialist, all roads lead to the highest honor of AAP membership—attainment of the FAAP (Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics) designation. There are approximately 33,000 FAAPs, or "voting Fellows" among the AAP membership, comprising 59% of the total membership.

Attaining the FAAP designation is the pinnacle of membership in the Academy, according to John Mitchell, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Membership. "Becoming a Fellow of the AAP—FAAP—is a privilege offered to a select group of women and men who are uniquely qualified to provide medical care for children. When I first placed FAAP after my name on my office door, I took pride in its meaning; demonstrated expertise in pediatric medical knowledge unmatched by any other designation. But it means even more than that. It represents belief in the mission of the AAP and 70 years of strong advocacy on behalf of children, pediatricians and the profession of pediatrics," said Dr. Mitchell.

To earn the FAAP designation, a pediatrician must pass the American Board of Pediatrics examination, obtain two sponsors who are FAAPs, and have their name published in AAP News as a new member applicant and, thus, reviewed by his/her peers. Once approved, FAAPs receive a rich benefit package including a choice of up to 12 AAP policy manuals, the Red Book, access to the Members Only Channel on the AAP Web site, access to MedMeds, and develop a practice Web site, and substantially reduced rates for all award-winning AAP publications and services. In addition, FAAPs earn the privilege of voting in AAP elections and choosing their future leaders. The FAAP means a great deal within the circle of the Academy, but it could mean so much more, particularly to patients and their families, and health care decision-makers. A succession of AAP leaders, including past presidents have stressed the importance of members promoting their value and their unique qualifications. Robert Hannemann, M.D., FAAP, 1987-'98 AAP president, launched a campaign in 1985 to promote recognition of the FAAP. "We should emphasize our FAAP distinction to our physician peers and to the families in our practices. We should value the right to use FAAP after our names, and we should make sure others know its meaning by our actions. This begins by members proudly placing it after their names on their business cards, on their doors and in their offices." Dr. Hannemann stated.

Dr. Mitchell added, "As the years have gone by quickly, I have come to believe that we pediatricians are too complacent about our abilities and our accomplishments. We mustn't be embarrassed to tout our own horn. We have earned the right to be FAAPs by completing rigorous training that no physicians complete. We needn't be presumptuous. The first step is simple, yet bold. Place FAAP after your name, wear it proudly, and explain what it means to those who inquire."