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AAP section addressing issues important to young physicians

from the AAP Department of Membership

Young physicians who have chosen pediatrics as a career always have been a large and important constituency within the Academy (over 40% of AAP members qualify as young physicians). Only in the last several years, however, have young physicians become a recognized entity within the organization.

The Section on Young Physicians (SOYP) was organized in 1999 as a Provisional Section, gained full section status in 2001 and has begun to work on issues affecting young physicians. Section members must be 40 years of age or younger or within the first five years of practice.

Young physician issues are of strategic importance for a variety of reasons: This group of pediatricians constitutes the immediate future; they have unique career development issues; and they represent the changing demographics of AAP membership.

About 75% of young pediatrics are AAP members, suggesting that they support the Academy's goals. At the same time, young physicians reflect a changing demographic: 68% of young pediatricians are women, and many young physicians would like to work part time.

The young pediatrician encounters issues related to managed care, which have not been addressed extensively in residency training. This group of pediatricians also is highly mobile — many of them change jobs within two years or re-enter a fellowship program. They are technologically savvy; many have young families of their own and are seeking a balance between family and work; and many have large educational debt that reflects the rising cost of medical education.

These are areas where the Academy can and must play a larger role in providing solutions.

While young AAP Fellows value their national benefits such as AAP publications and voting rights, many are not involved with the national organization or their chapters. Time constraints, lack of opportunity and lack of mentors all contribute to this lack of involvement. Many young pediatricians do not understand the Academy's structure and may not know whom to call. Still, many young pediatricians see the Academy as their home base for advocacy and career support.

Two chapters, New Jersey and Georgia, have established young physician groups in the last several years, with considerable success at organizing young physicians and addressing their issues.

The SOYP's new strategic plan, has outlined several initiatives to address the growing needs of young physicians within the Academy and to make recommendations on their behalf. The section has focused on the fact that it is in the “connecting business” and plans to organize a network of volunteers in all chapters to improve communication among young physicians and AAP chapters, and to create mentoring opportunities.

In addition, the SOYP plans to update and expand its Web site so it becomes an information resource on practice management, job listings, assistance with board certification and recertification, continuing medical education, part-time work, and balancing family and career.

The section also plans to create a welcome packet for all new young physicians to help them find programs and services within the Academy, through committees, sections and chapters.

If there's one word that defines the life of a young physician, it is change,” said David Krol, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, chair of SOYP. “New practice, new location, new responsibilities, maybe even new life partners, new children, new finances each challenge us as we begin our professional careers. Change, too, is coming to the AAP in the form of our demographics, practice patterns, technology and concern with personal/professional balance.

“The Section on Young Physicians embraces these changes and seeks to involve, promote and support young pediatricians within the Academy,” Dr. Krol continued. “We strive to make the SOYP a valuable resource to its members and an invaluable resource for the AAP. Memberships.”

For information on how to get involved in the AAP Section on Young Physicians, contact Jacqueline Burke, AAP Department of Membership, at (800) 433-9016, ext. 4759, or e-mail jburke@aap.org.