



Gold standard for PREParation

Pediatrics Review and Education Program, *PIR* mark 30 years of keeping pediatricians actively learning

by **Kristy Kennedy** • Correspondent

Back in 1978 in a small room off their kitchen, founding editor Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., FAAP, and his wife, Muriel, put the first few issues of the *Pediatrics in Review (PIR)* journal together.

Today, the journal can be read online and offers audiovisual supplements on various ailments,



Dr. Haggerty

like the sounds of different heart murmurs and videos showing how to pop a nursemaid elbow back into place or illustrating gait disturbances.

The current offerings are a testament to the commitment of the Academy's Pediatrics Review and Education Program (PREP) to keep up with the times. But as PREP celebrates its 30th anniversary, it also is clear that the program remains

focused on the basics of keeping pediatricians knowledgeable.

"That is our No. 1 mission: to keep the general practitioner up-to-date with pediatric medicine," said Lawrence F. Nazarian, M.D., FAAP, *PIR* editor-in-chief.

It's a mission that has been in place since Dr. Haggerty created the first issue. "There was a lot of talk about how to maintain competence," said Dr. Haggerty, *PIR* editor emeritus. "It was a matter of thinking through how to do this. From the very beginning, we decided to have a series of questions and then discussion about the answers and how to refurbish your knowledge."

Clear goals, favorite features

PREP editors aim to make the program readable and engaging. "Most people who are reading it are reading it after a long day at the office," Dr. Nazarian said. "Accuracy and completeness is at the top of our goals, and then readability. It is clear and practical."

PIR includes peer-reviewed articles featuring best practices and real cases. Most popular is a feature on case studies. "You see the three cases and think, 'What would I do diagnostically to nail this down?' That is a much more active kind of learning than reading an article and is by far the most popular," Dr. Haggerty said.

Both publications are available online, along with archives, sup-



plemental audio and visual information, and links to other references.

The annual self-assessment portion of the program aims to be engaging as well. Multiple-choice questions in PREP ask pediatricians how they would treat patients with various ailments. Besides providing background on the patients, the questions often include visuals like photographs of rashes, chest and bone X-rays, or growth charts.

"The review and self-assessment give pediatricians the opportunity to evaluate themselves and let them choose how to expand their knowledge," said Mary Ellen Rimsza, M.D., FAAP, editor of PREP Self-Assessment.



Dr. Rimsza

CME credit 'on your own time'

Besides keeping pediatricians sharp, PREP The Curriculum also qualifies them for continuing medical education (CME) hours. Pediatricians who read the peer-reviewed articles and complete the self-assessment can earn up to 76 CME credit hours. Nurse practitioners and pharmacists also can use the assessments toward continuing hours.

"You can do it at home on your own time," Dr. Rimsza said, which is a perk for busy pediatricians or those looking to keep costs down. "You can get a lot out of it without having to travel to a conference."

Although editors of the publications work two years in advance to pick the topics covered and to allow for rigorous review of articles, the process is fluid because it focuses on educational objectives set by the American Board of Pediatrics.

"There is a dynamic aspect to this," Dr. Haggerty said. "Knowledge changes, and some things are added and others withdrawn."

Feedback is welcomed. Sometimes readers disagree with answers to quiz questions. Final answers to self-assessment questions are chosen by an editorial board and reflect a preferred answer designed to stimulate critical thinking. Questions that receive a lot of feedback occasionally are addressed in *PIR*.

Looking ahead

Expect the program to continue using technology and adapting how it provides information.

"We want to preserve those aspects of the program that work well and not change them for the sake of changing," Dr. Nazarian

said. “However, we understand that adult learning styles change, and we want to take advantage of technology. We can offer an old-fashioned review with a combination of technology that can teach you in other ways.”

A readership survey is planned for this year to find out more about what subscribers most like about the program and to get feedback on the different formats. Dr. Nazarian said he would like

to see the journal expand its Internet applications in other ways, possibly through blogs or downloadable MP3 files.

All of that boils down to providing better health care for children, Dr. Haggerty said. And the covers of his *PIR* journals — most often artwork done by children (a feature inspired by Dr. Haggerty’s wife) — remind pediatricians of just that.

Best practices: how pediatricians use PREP The Curriculum, *PIR*

PREP The Curriculum is a two-part continuing medical education program aimed at keeping pediatricians up-to-date and preparing them for certification exams.

The two parts — a monthly journal, *Pediatrics in Review*, and an annual self-assessment book (also offered as a CD-ROM or online) — can be purchased separately. But taken together over a five-year period, the content of the publications covers all 3,700 specifications that the American Board of Pediatrics covers in its exams. The program costs \$284 per year for members and \$389 for non-members.

PIR is available online as well and has a couple of Internet-only articles each month. The publication includes monthly reviews, articles with summary points and suggested reading, and review questions.

The self-assessment book is filled with multiple-choice questions on how to treat various patients. An answer book includes critiques and suggested readings. Meanwhile, the CD-ROM and online versions are more interactive.

Pediatricians can measure their progress by saving their answers. They also can take advantage of hyperlinks that take them to other sources of information on medical conditions.

PREP The Curriculum’s circulation stands at about 27,000. An additional

4,100 readers subscribe to *PIR* only, and 2,100 take PREP Self-Assessment only. PREP translations include Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Polish,

Chinese and Turkish. The Academy directly circulates PREP products to 56 countries, and *PIR* online is available to health institutions in 108 developing countries. *PIR*, now translated into Spanish, Italian, Hungarian and Polish, has a worldwide circulation of about 60,000.

“Even though *PIR* is mostly slanted to Western pediatricians, we try to include material relevant to the developing world,” said Lawrence F. Nazarian, M.D., FAAP, *PIR* editor-in-chief. “We try to be of help to North American pediatricians

who will see diseases brought back by traveling patients.”

Under an educational grant from Abbott Nutrition, residents receive the program for free and contribute to the popular case study section of *PIR*. “They are seeing a lot of patients and are very enthusiastic about submitting,” Dr. Nazarian said. “The residents are our future.”

The success of PREP also has led to the creation of similar programs for subspecialties like neonatology, critical care and emergency medicine, among others.

For details, visit www.aap.org/profed/prep.htm.

