

Poverty threatens long-term health of children

May 3 2014

Pediatricians, social scientists, economists and policy experts will come together on Saturday, May 3, to discuss the critical problem that childhood poverty presents in the U.S. – and steps to end poverty.

The group will take part in a state-of-the-art plenary session titled 'Childhood Poverty and Its Consequences: Potential Solutions,' at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia. National and international experts will discuss ways to address poverty using government economic policy, innovative educational reform, new models for pediatric practice, and provocative social strategies.

Children are the poorest segment of society: 22 percent of U.S. children live below the [federal poverty level](#), a prevalence that has persisted since the 1970s.

"Poverty has a pervasive influence on a child's health," said plenary co-chair James M. Perrin, MD, FAAP, president of the AAP. "Every chronic disease in children is both more common and worse if you are poor, and treatment is less effective if you are poor. It is absolutely critical that we come together and develop ways to break the cycle before another generation of children grows into adulthood suffering the long-term impact of childhood poverty."

Research has shown childhood poverty leads to adult poor health through epigenetics, toxic stress, and the cycle of chronic disease, including

obesity.

The session is given in honor of the late Joel Alpert, MD, FAAP, who at various times served as president of both the Academic Pediatric Association (APA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and who was a passionate advocate on behalf of children living in poverty. Both the APA and the AAP have made childhood poverty a priority and focus of their work, building on Dr. Alpert's pioneering contributions.

The plenary will run from 2:45-4:45 p.m. in the Vancouver Convention Center. Topics and presenters include:

- "The Role of Policy and Parental Employment in Reducing Childhood Poverty and Improving Children's Well-Being," presented by Carolyn J. Heinrich, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.
- "The Canadian Experience: Targeted Child Tax Benefits and Impact on Child Well-Being," presented by Kevin Milligan, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada.
- "Welfare Reform, Pregnancy Delay and Other Strategies to Decrease Intergenerational Poverty," presented by Ron Haskins, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC.
- "School Reform and Beyond: Improving the Educational Outcomes of Low-Income Children," presented by J. Lawrence Aber, NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York, N.Y.
- "Changing Pediatric Practice to Affect Childhood Poverty: Views from the Community," presented by Francis Rushton, Past Chair, AAP District IV, AAP Early Brain and Child Development Leadership Workgroup

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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