

# Department of Research Abstracts

## **PEDIATRICIANS' REPORTED USE OF ENHANCED COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES:**

**RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY** L. Sanders, S. Federico, M. Glusman, B. Bayldon, M.A. Abrams, B. Dreyer, W. Cull, K. O'Connor. Univ. of Miami, FL; Univ. of Colorado, Denver, CO; Children's Memorial, Chicago, IL; Iowa Health Systems; New York Univ., NY; AAP, Elk Grove, IL. **Presented at the 2008 Pediatric Academic Societies Annual Meeting.**

**Background:** At least 1 in 3 parents has difficulty understanding health information. Evidence supports the use of enhanced communication techniques to improve parent understanding.

**Objective:** To assess pediatrician-reported use of enhanced communication techniques (ECTs) and the factors associated with their use.

**Design/Methods:** Survey of a national random sample of AAP U.S. members (N=1605, response rate 56%. Analysis limited to 848 who provide patient care.) Questions assessed reported use of 16 different communication techniques, 8 of which were considered ECTs. *Low use of ECTs* was considered a report of using  $\leq 2$  of 8 techniques usually or always. Bivariate and multivariate analyses assessed the association between low use of ECTs and provider characteristics (age, sex, specialty, interest in receiving training on ECTs), perceived barriers to communication, and perceived patient characteristics: % of children publicly insured, % of parents with low literacy, and % of parents with limited English proficiency.

**Results:** Each ECT was reported by fewer than 50% of respondents (Table). The most commonly reported barriers to using ECTs were limited time (72%) and information volume/complexity (64%). Most (57%) reported interest in further training on ECTs. Low use of ECTs was more common among primary-care providers (AOR 2.2; 95% CI 1.4 – 3.4), among those who perceived limited time as a barrier (AOR 1.6; 95% CI 1.1 – 2.5), and among those who reported that < 25% parents have low literacy (AOR 1.9; 95% CI 1.1 – 3.3).

Reported Use of Enhanced Communication Techniques (% "Usually or Always")		
Technique	Overall	Primary Care Providers
Follow-up phone calls	13	12
Ask parents/patients to teach back what they understood	23	18**
Use a picture in the exam room	26	21**
Underline or circle key points	28	27
Demonstrate medication dosing	34	32*
Write out medication schedule	39	33**
Have staff reinforce key messages	43	32**
Write out treatment plan	50	46**

p<.05; \*\* p <.01

**Conclusions:** Fewer than 1 in 3 pediatricians reported regular use of most enhanced communication techniques. Efforts to improve pediatricians use of enhanced communication techniques should address provider perceptions about time constraints and parent literacy skills.

