

VCHIP CHAMP VDH COVID-19

March 19, 2021 | 12:15-12:45pm Call Questions and Answers*

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Acknowledging Our Anniversary

Dr. Lewis First: It's been a year. I'm really delighted that Wendy, Breena, and the entire VCHIP team asked me to come on and take a moment to express my gratitude to all of you who have been and continue to be on these calls, which I believe has made a difference in so many ways. The importance of what we have been doing through these phone calls struck me about two weekends ago, when I was at the National Pediatric Chairs meeting. I co-run the New Pediatric Chairs Group which used to meet every three years, now meets annually. This year there were 35+ new Pediatric Department Chairs, representing about 130 departments. In that session, I was asked repeatedly, "why have I stayed as Chair so long?" and "why have I stayed in Vermont for so long?" And I just want all of you know that when I was asked, it was a no-brainer. Because the first thing I thought of were these calls.

I told the Chairs about these calls and about all of you. These calls really help us remember what it means to be pediatricians. These calls have helped us all remember what it means to work collaboratively, across the state. No matter where our offices or hospitals are (New York, New Hampshire, etc.) to improve the lives of children and families, we must work collaboratively. That's what these calls have done. They've taught us what it means to teach and to learn from each other. The medical school preaches active learning and there is no more active learning than this. Three times a week all of you are teaching and learning from each other. It's taught us (and continues to teach us) what it means from a wellness standpoint, to have a group of supports who are there for each other. Through good times, bad times, tough times, and unsolvable times, you can lean on each other and have a beacon of wellness and resilience.

We preach strength-based approach in our offices and on our floors. This is a strength-based approach to dealing with a very challenging time. After a year of these calls, we're still here, still generating these calls with 100-some people three days a week. I would say that this is a harbinger and a symbol that the Vermont Pediatric Nation (as I like to call it) is still going strong. No matter what has been thrown at us, we are still going strong and we're getting stronger. That's a testament not to me, to *us*, to all of you. Some of you have rarely missed a call. Because the goal is to see this pandemic go away. The goal is to hopefully see the frequency of these calls start to decrease, that would be a sign of normalcy. But not for *us* to go away. If we need to come together, we now have a vehicle to do that and continue to do that to discuss whatever it is we need to talk about.

Sometimes we can miss the forest for the trees. I hope you all realize what we have talked about this past year. It's unbelievable. It started with discussions of how we're going to use PPE in our offices but it went way beyond an infectious illness: to schools, to school health, to mental health, to systemic racism, to handling crisis after crisis, and so much more. In the midst of it, we've laughed, we've smiled, we've reached out for each other, we've done virtual hugs, and at times we've probably cried as we've heard about what's been going on. I just want to take a moment and tell you: I am so proud to be a part of Vermont Pediatric Nation and do calls like this. One thing I know is never going to change is the dedication that all of you have

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to making a difference in the lives of the children and families in this region and sharing that with the rest of the country. We're not happy until we try to do it better and better and better every day.

This is unique. I have not come across anything that even begins to resemble what we have brought together. I know that story will be told when we're ready to tell it. I salute all of you and I thank you for the privilege of being a part of this group, this team, this pediatric nation. Wherever people are listening, I believe all of us are fortunate to be a part of something that as they say: "the sum of the parts is far better than what each of us can individually contribute. It's not a happy anniversary when a pandemic has lasted a year. But thank you for being here this past year. I know you will keep being there for each other, and most of all for the children and families that we all care so much about. You are what pediatrics is about and I could not be prouder to be a part of this. There isn't any other place that I would rather be than with all of you.

Thank you for the honor and the privilege to continue to fight this fight and do it in a way that makes it worthwhile to know that we are making a difference. We're not done yet. I want to thank Wendy, Breena, and the crew who are behind the scenes day in and out. You are what pediatric nation is all about and we do this as a team. Thank you again. Hopefully we won't have to celebrate these anniversaries in this way again but I couldn't think of a more important group of people to make sure we note this milestone, but more importantly note why we do what we do and what it means to be pediatricians.

I meant what I said and I will continue to be here as much as I can. Everybody, please understand that when I'm not on these calls I'm still indirectly on these calls trying to make things happen for all of us. And most importantly for all of the kids, whether they're in our catchment area or not. The catchment area is all kids of New England and that's what these calls do. Again, I'm right there with you and I'm just proud and thankful that I can be.

Mark Del Monte, CEO/Executive VP, AAP: I'm looking down the list of participants here and it's just a who's who of incredible pediatricians and leaders. I'm glad to crash this event today just to mark a couple of important things. First, thinking about this from the American Academy of Pediatrics' perspective, what a remarkable time in the nation's history. Thinking about a year ago, the things we were thinking about, things we were working on, what we thought 2020 would look like. They were the normal issues that we work on and the passion that pediatricians have for children and practice and families, all were right in the forefront of our minds. And then, the world started to change.

With increasing levels of alarm, it became clearer and clearer to people that this was going to be a Disruptive change to the lives of children and families, to the practice of pediatrics, to the entire operation of the medical sector, our country, and the world. There are untold stories across Vermont, and across the country, and around the world of incredible suffering and I think as pediatricians you all have been on the front lines of that work from the very beginning. We worry about children all the time, more so when we can't see them. For the children who went away from practices and we struggle to get them back and caught up, the suffering is real. The disruption of practice, whether it's to office staff or the medical clinicians, or the other professionals who work in medicine, practice volume losses, and all the things that happened. There is a long and lasting set of disruptions that will be with us for a long time. One of our goals as we start to think about the future is how to dig out from that and to regear and retool for the long term so we are thinking 5 years ahead instead of 5 years behind.

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In the midst of all this suffering, and all the real difficulties that we're going to be dealing with, I think one of the most important things for us to lean into at this moment is our capacity for rapid scale innovation. Out of high necessity, in a matter of days and weeks, people adapted whole new systems that came into play almost immediately, in response to the pandemic. Structures were created, for example, this conference call. People began to meet all the time to coordinate strategy across different sectors to be in touch with each other, community by community, practice by practice, and sometimes child by child. Leaders stepped forward, like Dr. Davis.

Dr. Davis, you are an amazing leader on our Board of Directors in addition to a leader within your state, and you have stepped forward to lead in your area but also with the AAP. You were meeting every day with folks in your state, meeting every Saturday with the Board of Directors, implementing new strategies. Telemedicine practices that were not even contemplated in some practices and arenas before this pandemic are now standard operating procedures. At every level, at the practice level, at the community level, at the hospital and institution level, rapid-scale innovation occurred on the fly because that's what kids and practices needed. I think we can hold on to that innovative spirit. We can tap into the awareness that we now know that we can do things quickly, we can do things urgently, and we can do things with high quality. And with those PDSA cycles we can adjust when we need to. The capacity of our community to come together, to join together, to lead together, to innovate together is deeper and broader than even we suspected and in fact we thought it was pretty broad and deep beforehand.

There are a lot of stories to tell here. We are in no way through this pandemic but we know that we can continue to get through it together and we can continue to innovate on behalf of children and families. Pediatrics can lead the way in all sorts of medicine, all the way down the line. It's been, in some ways, paradoxically inspiring to see what individuals and teams have been able to accomplish everywhere in response to that. That is certainly the case in Vermont. Let me just call out Becca Bell, Chapter President of Vermont and Erica Gibson, the Vice President. Thank you to the Vermont Chapter for incredible leadership. Becca, particularly your knowledge of various topics and issues dealing with children. Such an example of stepping forward and leading through such difficult times. Thank you to Stephanie Winter, the ED for the Chapter as well. In addition to Stephanie Winters working so hard in Vermont, she has been the leader of our Executive Director steering committee at AAP. She's been setting course for all the chapters across the country, and joining together with that team to learn what's working across the state.

These examples of innovation and collaboration happen over and over again. From my vantage point at national, I am just staggered and impressed, motivated and inspired by the incredible work that has been done in response to this unbelievably hard situation. I want to thank you on behalf of national AAP for everything that you're doing, have done, and will do in the future. And to recognize your hard work at this historic moment. We have been marking the one year anniversary of AAP becoming a virtual organization ourselves and it's really surfacing so much, so many memories, so many recognitions of the losses that we have endured but also so many acknowledgments of the incredible achievements that we have made.

Of course, centering all of us, squarely in our focus, is the needs of children and families during this pandemic and after it. We've got to get kids back to school. When they're back in school we need to get kids back into care, caught up on vaccines, and start to tend to social emotional development in addition to the practical needs of nutrition, housing, income support, etc. We've got plenty of work to do but I think it is such well-spent time to pause once in a while and look each other in the eyes (even if it's virtually) and

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thank each other and acknowledge each other for work well done. So let me just do that and thank all of you, acknowledge you for your work that has been well done in this pandemic.

Questions/Discussion

Q: Who is eligible for the vaccine now? Who will be eligible next? # Updates to remaining age bands signups now listed.

A: Nathaniel Waite, RN, VDH: <https://apps.health.vermont.gov/COVID/faq/#vaccine-eligibility>

A: Stephanie Winters, Vermont Medical Society: *Incarcerated vaccinated by April 1st!*

Q: For parents of pediatric patients who have been living in VT for the duration of the pandemic, but are not technically residents, can they still get vaccinated here on the VT schedule?

A: Nathaniel Waite, RN, VDH: *Do I have to be a Vermont resident to get the COVID-19 vaccine? # Last Updated: Mar 18 Yes. You will need to provide your address to make an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine. However, if you live in another state, you can still get a vaccine in Vermont if: You work in an occupation or setting in Vermont that is currently eligible. You moved to Vermont within the last 6 months with the intention of becoming a resident and are in an age group, occupation or other group that is currently eligible. If you are a resident of another state and have a primary care provider in Vermont, you are not eligible to get a vaccine in Vermont. This is because primary care providers do not have vaccine to give right now. You will need to get the vaccine in your home state. You do not need any identification to make or go to a vaccine appointment. Make an appointment to get the COVID-19 vaccine.*