

# Section on Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine Update – Raising our Voices

Lily J. Lou, MD, FAAP

Dear All,

Your representatives on the Section Executive Committee have spent the past three months reflecting upon our Section's goals and how we should prioritize our resources and activities to best serve you and the community of neonatology.

Our previous SONPM strategic plan was formulated in 2016 and saw the introduction of advocacy and a strong emphasis on quality, with a sustained prioritization of innovative education and member value. In this update, I'd like to review our shiny **new Strategic Plan** and point out some shifts in focus and new activities that reflect our updated priorities. The full plan can be found on our website at <https://services.aap.org/en/community/aap-sections/sonpm/mission-goals-core-values-and-strategic-plan/>. We really appreciated all of the responses to the survey that provided insight into what matters to our members.

First of all, we have re-crafted our Mission and vision statements to try to capture more concisely what we are all about and how we hope to accomplish our goals:

To improve the health of newborns by enabling the neonatology community to provide optimal care through education, research and advocacy

Vision

Healthy newborns, universal quality care, fulfilled professionals

Our 2021-2026 Strategic Plan contains the following 6 domains:

1. Education
2. Member Value
3. Optimal Care
4. Advocacy
5. Health of the Subspecialty
6. Health of the Section

Let's take a closer look at each one.

One of the most key areas of our mission is **EDUCATION**. Our goal is *to improve the knowledge, skills, and perspectives of neonatal-perinatal providers through high-quality education and state-of-the-art education delivery*. We continue to value updating our educational approaches to the way neonatologists and trainees learn in today's world. This includes our support of such innovative strategies as the flipped classroom, integration of tools like Quizlet, interactive sessions, and practice question banks into NeoPREP, and conversion of many of our learning activities to effective virtual platforms, in addition to sustaining our strong support for trainee networking and research program development. We have also added "perspectives" into the goal—this is to reflect the prime importance of issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. This was not added as a separate domain but is woven into every

aspect of our plan.

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The **MEMBER VALUE** domain remains our biggest one and the area in which we most need continual input from members about where to focus our attention and resources. The goal is stated as: *to identify and address the needs and interests prioritized by SONPM members*. A common theme in this area is understanding the needs and member value of section membership for neonatologists practicing in primarily non-university settings. In response to this thread of concern, we are launching a working group called "All Pathways" to make sure the Section serves neonatologists pursuing all the various career trajectories open to those in our subspecialty. We will also focus on communicating on a multitude of platforms to reach members the way they like to get information. As our members develop multiple robust interest groups, we hope to tie them together through the website to make it easy to find synergy and avoid duplicated effort. We are now inviting leaders of our special interest groups and liaisons from partner organizations to attend the SONPM executive committee meetings to enhance leadership transparency and promote cross-talk and coordination between all sectors of our membership. We will also represent our members' views in discussions about the MOC-4 process with the ABP and work to streamline avenues for meeting the current requirements.

Our third domain is a combination of our previous Quality domain with a recognition of the seminal importance of research. The **OPTIMAL CARE** goal is *to facilitate high-quality research and quality improvement in neonatology to assure excellent clinical care*. The SONPM quality Metrics Working Group is poised to submit the first of several white papers for publication so that quality is calibrated meaningfully on scales set by neonatologists rather than by external entities. There will be further work to do to refine the proposed metrics and work toward implementation. Our research mission is supported through our multiple fellows' conferences, the Klaus and Young Investigator awards, as well as travel scholarships to key neonatal conferences on a national level. One new deliverable in this domain is to elevate issues of diversity and inclusion in neonatology scholarship.

**ADVOCACY** was introduced as a strategic domain in 2016, and we continue to work *to define an advocacy agenda for the neonate and develop the capacity of section members to achieve it*. We will achieve this through our SONPM Advocacy Committee, our

advocacy listserv, which disseminates updates on neonatology-specific issues with tools to speak up for babies, through our support of section members to attend the AAP Advocacy Conference, an upcoming workshop on advocacy at our Scottsdale Workshop, and development of toolkits like the one on coverage of donor milk that the Georgia and Ohio chapters are using to help babies get access to this essential intervention. One hot topic to watch is the potential for states to extend Medicare coverage for mothers to 12 months after delivery to avoid disruptions in care at a critical time point. Look for updates, op-eds, and podcasts from this active group.

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Our new strategic plan continues to include the domain of **HEALTH OF THE SUBSPECIALTY** to envision, articulate and engage members in supporting the neonatal-perinatal medicine profession. This area encompasses priorities that overlap with other domains. As mentioned above, the current ABP approach to assuring continued competency in our field is a frequent topic of discussion, complicated this year by the delays in the initial certification exams imposed by the pandemic. We will foster dialogue between the SONPM and the ABP to represent the viewpoints and concerns of section members, as well as working to make existing routes to meeting the current requirements easier to navigate. We are anxious to learn more about the needs of private practice neonatologists and look forward to enhancing ways the SONPM can support their interests, per the working group mentioned above. We continue to appreciate the robust functioning of our coding committee, now chaired by Dr. Scott Duncan, in keeping up with the evolution of our practice. We will also work to ensure a diverse workforce of neonatologists in the future, so understanding our training numbers and areas of need are crucial. We want to publicize leadership opportunities widely to better engage more section members in fulfilling endeavors within the academy and thus amplify the voice of the subspecialist in our professional home.

Our final domain, to ensure the long-term sustained organizational **HEALTH OF THE SECTION**, is especially critical as budgets tighten and our traditional sources of support come under increased scrutiny. There is no other professional association in our field. We need to build strong operational security within the

AAP to withstand a range of future economic landscapes. We also want to develop a skilled and diverse pipeline of future leaders who will take the helm as we work through the goals of many Strategic Plan updates to come

Please visit our website, review the SONPM Strategic Plan in detail, and always feel welcome to get in touch with ideas for where we need to turn our attention or inquiries about how you can engage with the Section. We are enthusiastic about moving the Section forward, but we need you to point us in the right direction.

In closing, I'll share this inspirational video called "Be the Change." It was produced by Kulture City, a non-profit organization that promotes sensory inclusivity, trying to make the world better for "individuals of unique abilities" such as invisible challenges like autism.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8oJV\\_mBY9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8oJV_mBY9g)

Stay well and take care,

Lily

Disclosure: There are no reported conflicts.

**NT**

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