

# SPAP Shout Out

A monthly update for SPAP members with a purpose to educate and encourage the engagement of PAs who work with pediatric patients



## COVID-19 in Pediatrics

Brian Wingrove, PA-C

*Brian is a past-president of SPAP and is currently serving as the AAPA's liaison to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Brian has practiced in pediatrics since graduating from the Duke PA Program in 1999. He worked in primary care for 6 years, and has been at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta practicing in pulmonary diseases for the last 13 years, where he also is PRN staff in the urgent care network. Brian is a PALS instructor, volunteers at asthma camp, and coordinates student rotations within his practice. He is a scifi geek whose 3 cats are named after Star Trek characters. He also enjoys birdwatching, gardening and traveling.*



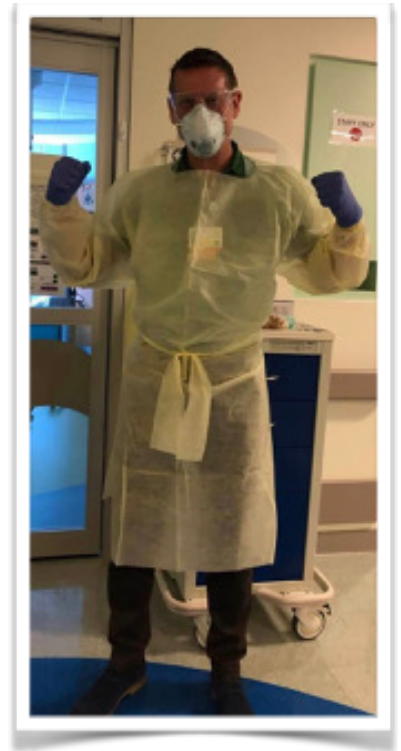
This is a very anxiety laden time for all of us. I know many PAs who have been furloughed or laid off. I wanted to share some information about what we know, and more to the point what we don't know about COVID-19 and children. At my institution, we are seeing very low volumes in our ERs, Urgent Care Centers, and inpatient units. Two inpatient floors and one of our 5 ICUs have been closed due to low census. The good news is that this disease just does not affect children in the same way it does adults – which will be a good mystery for researchers to study once we get through this pandemic. This has been reported as well in many other countries affected by this disease.

I was on a WebEx with our hospital leadership this morning. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has cared for 18 children so far who tested positive for COVID-19. Initially we had no testing ability other than what could be provided by the CDC. Our facility ultimately devised its own nasopharyngeal swab PCR test, but we are still limiting it to inpatient care. 10 of our 18 patients required ICU level care, all of whom had an underlying condition. Asthma, however, has not been culprit in any of the children. In fact, New York state officials say asthma is not among the top 10 chronic health problems suffered by people who died from COVID-19. 16 of our patients have been

discharged home, and there have been no deaths. The age range of the kids we had was 8 weeks to 16 years. Children do seem to have less severe illness and shorter duration of symptoms. The most common adult symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) are seen less frequently in kids. Some are presenting with GI symptoms, which is not the norm in adult patients. There are reports of skin manifestations – purple nodules on toes and fingers, and livido reticularis. Our pediatric population seems to be relatively safe from severe disease. There are still a lot of unknowns, especially as social distancing measures become more relaxed. I hope that everyone is hanging in there. #healthcarewarriors

## WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

We would like to encourage our members to share stories of support, strength, and encouragement during this unprecedented and difficult time. Please email [tgharkins3@gmail.com](mailto:tgharkins3@gmail.com) with any comments you would like to submit to share on our Facebook page and website. This is also a great time to nominate a coworker for our PA of the Year Award (see below).



## SPAP PA OF THE YEAR APPLICATION

OUR APPLICATION FORM FOR OUR 2020 PA OF THE YEAR IS NOW OPEN. SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS **APRIL 26TH, 2020**. PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#) FOR APPLICATION DETAILS



# SPAP 2020 STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION



**CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS**



# ONLINE CME OPPORTUNITIES!

SPAP is continuing to offer online lectures that are category 1 CME credit. These online lectures are **free** for members and only \$15 per lecture for non-members. Click [here](#) to learn more. If you are interested in getting involved as an online lecturer, please email [tgharkins3@gmail.com](mailto:tgharkins3@gmail.com)



**Topic:** The Management of Sickle Cell Disease for Pediatrics

**Overview:**

Join Susan Kirk, PA-C, as she covers the important details on how to manage sickle cell disease in a Pediatric environment. She will review the types of sickle cell diseases that are present and explain the general preventative care that is recommended as well as touch on the common acute complications a provider may experience and what the therapy options are for the patient.

**Topic:** Interpreting the CBC & Other Helpful Tips

**Overview:**

Join Susan Kirk, PA-C, as she guides listeners on the best ways to interpret the CBC. In this lecture, Mrs. Kirk will provide a few helpful tips on how to review CBC parameters, understand normal ranges within the CBC, and what the limitations for testing are as well as useful and helpful tips on the CBC topic.



## SPAP Member Spotlight

Kristen Riach PA-C, MPAS

*Kristen received a dual undergraduate degree from Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX) in biology and psychology. She then worked in an inpatient rehabilitation hospital as a patient care technician*

*and also worked in clinical research for two years before attending PA school. She attended University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio where she received her masters in Physician Assistant Studies. She started working as a PA in outpatient pediatric hematology and oncology, specifically in bone marrow transplant, at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, TX where she has been working for the past two years. She is a clinical preceptor for rotating PA and NP students and she is a preceptor for the Physical Diagnosis course at Baylor College of Medicine's PA program.*

### How did your career as a PA start?

When I was 16 I began volunteering with pediatric oncology patients. It didn't take long to realize that they were a special group of kids and I wanted to help take care of them one day. My passion for medicine grew over the years. My senior year of college, two different doctors I was shadowing



recommend I consider becoming a PA. So, I learned what a PA was, began shadowing PAs, and fell in love with profession.

**What does your average day at work look like?**

On average I work in the clinic weekdays from 8 am to 5pm. Due to the complexity of BMT patients, I see an average 5 patients a day, which is considered a full load in our clinic. These visits can often last hours to an entire day as they may need transfusion, infusions or have other issues. These visits are either part of the extensive pre- transplant work up, routine follow up for post transplant patients, sick visits, and donor evaluations. I have frequent follow up with my patients ranging from three times a week to once a month in their first year out of transplant. I also do 1-2 procedure days a month where I perform lumbar punctures and bone marrow aspirate and biopsies. I also, on occasion, will assist in the OR with bone marrow harvests for matched sibling donors.

**How did you first hear about SPAP?**

A fellow PA colleague who was a member told me about SPAP. I was excited to see an organization specifically for PAs in pediatrics! I appreciate the monthly updates and recourses.

**Why pediatrics?**

I love working with kids (and yes, about 90% of the time, the parents)! Kids are resilient, intuitive, fun and full of life and joy even in difficult circumstances.

**What is your favorite part of being a PA?**

There are so many things I love about being a PA. It is a truly special profession I am honored to be a part of. There are a few things that come to mind. I love my patients (and their families). Nothing beats getting a hug from a grateful parent or a piece of art for my desk from a patient. I love getting to be closely involved in the lives of my patients and families as they navigate cancer and other blood disorders. Watching a child overcome the odds and go on to live a happy life makes every difficult part of the job worth it. I love my co-workers. People who work in pediatrics are generally pretty fun and cool. They genuinely care about the best interest of the patient. I love how the field of pediatric hematology and oncology is always changing. Treatments continue to advance. There is always something new to know and learn. I love getting to be a part of education. I enjoy the challenge of meeting each family where they are at so that they can feel comfortable knowing what is going on in the care of their child. I also love being able to be involved in the education of PA students. I hope to be able to give back to other PA students as much as was given to me when I was a student.

**Any advice for new PAs or PA students?**

Don't be fearful of what you do not know and be confident in what you do know. Know your limits of where your knowledge begins and ends. There is so much for us all to learn whether it is clinical evidenced based practice standards, ground breaking research, or learning how to better relate to and communicate with our patients. The learning opportunities in this field are endless. The things we do

not know should challenge us to learn and grow as a professional or student. It makes us better PAs. Find a medical provider who is more experienced and do not be afraid to ask the for help or input. I had a preceptor in PA school that taught me these two phrases I have learned to be comfortable with when I am stumped: “I don’t know the answer to your question, but I will find out” and “I don’t know what is causing this, but give me some time and I am going to figure it out.” Then, follow through with your word in a timely manner. Your patients will appreciate your hard work and effort despite a lack of knowledge. My other piece of advice: never take for granted the privilege and responsibility of being let into some of the most private and/or difficult parts of patients lives. Patients place a lot of trust in us and that should be honored.

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