

Plenary to focus on supporting moms, babies exposed to opioids

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Editor's note: *The 2019 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Oct. 25-29 in New Orleans.*

Stephen W. Patrick, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., FAAP, often thinks back to an infant he cared for about two years ago. The newborn had classic signs of drug withdrawal: irritability, rapid weight loss, loose stools and vomiting. The baby's mom, however, denied using opioids in pregnancy.

When the drug screen came back about a week later, the umbilical cord was positive for buprenorphine.

The case, Dr. Patrick said, illustrates how the lack of access to substance use treatment is leading to medication diversion for self-treatment. It also highlights the stigma around opioid use.

"As I walked in to talk to this mom, her first response was, 'Is my baby going to get taken away?'" said Dr. Patrick, director of the Center for Child Health Policy and assistant professor of pediatrics and health policy at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. "This issue of stigma around substance use oftentimes drives people away from being forthcoming about substance use. For me, it was important to understand the layers of complexity of what was happening around these women."

Dr. Patrick will discuss the importance of focusing on both moms and babies during his plenary talk titled "Newborns Exposed to Substances: Understanding Their Needs and Supporting Their Caregivers" (P3112) from 11:10-11:30 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 27 in the Great Hall of the convention center.

In 2016, about one infant was born every 15 minutes in the U.S. with opioid withdrawal, according to a [study](#) published in *Pediatrics*.

During the session, Dr. Patrick will review clinical aspects of caring for these babies; evidence for rooming in and breastfeeding when appropriate; and how to improve systems of care inside and outside the hospital. He also will emphasize the importance of looking at the opioid crisis from a public health standpoint.

"Oftentimes, I see us as a community very focused on just the hospital stay and just on reducing length of stay," said Dr. Patrick, a member of the AAP Committee on Substance Use and Prevention and Section on Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine. "I think we need to look beyond that and think about how we can have improvements to care for moms before birth and improvements for infants for years to come."

Dr. Patrick also will present "Family-Centered Care for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (A3221)" with Alison V. Holmes, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, from 4-5:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 27.

*For more coverage of the 2019 AAP National Conference & Exhibition, visit
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