



Virtual town halls on COVID-19 connect experts, pediatricians

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Every other Thursday night, about 350 people log in to an AAP virtual town hall to hear an expert panel discuss the latest issues related to COVID-19.

The hourlong program, “Connecting With the Experts: A COVID-19 Townhall Series” at <http://bit.ly/covid19townhallseries>, debuted Sept. 9, 2020, as a six-event series. It now has 40 episodes and counting. More than 4,406 unique visitors have participated, including 131 individuals from other countries.

Most episodes cover a range of timely COVID issues, while others are dedicated to themes like return to sports or physician resilience. Participants can submit questions or comments when they register and during the event.

Common questions are “When will vaccines be ready for under 5s?” and “How can I better support families during the pandemic?”

After a welcoming message from the AAP president, town hall moderator Anne R. Edwards, M.D., FAAP, AAP chief medical officer, reviews the weekly COVID data report from the AAP and Children’s Hospital Association. She introduces the night’s experts and reminds participants of any recent AAP interim guidance.

With the assistance of several staff members, Dr. Edwards keeps an eye on the topics in the chat box, repeating some questions to the panelists, whose opinions and comments may not necessarily reflect AAP policy. Links to resources are posted for participants and later emailed to them.

Panelists typically include a pediatric infectious diseases expert, along with other AAP leaders from committees, councils or sections.

Outside experts also have been on the panel. An appearance by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, M.D., on June 20, 2021, drew 861 viewers, the highest ever.

Episodes have featured the AAP president-elect candidates; a three-part segment on “Ask the *Red Book* About COVID-19,” with Editor David W. Kimberlin, M.D., FAAP; and experts from areas including school health, neurology, children with disabilities, sports medicine, cardiology, critical care and emergency medicine.

Yvonne “Bonnie” A. Maldonado, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases (COID), has appeared nearly 20 times. Another frequent guest is COID member James D. Campbell, M.D., M.S., FAAP.

A final — more philosophical — question is posed to all panelists, such as “What gives you hope during this time?” or “What will you do differently in your practice when COVID is over?”

The responses often help pediatricians know they are not alone in their pandemic journey.

Resource

View archived town halls or register for an upcoming session at <http://bit.ly/covid19townhallseries>.