



PRESS RELEASE

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ASPHO PRESIDENT SPOTLIGHTS DISPARITIES IN HEALTHCARE

April 2021: The pressing issue of disparities in healthcare in pediatric hematology/oncology will be highlighted at the Presidential Symposium at the 2021 ASPHO Conference taking place virtually April 20-23. “The COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled and exacerbated the profound existing disparities in socioeconomic conditions across racial lines in the United States, with COVID-19 disproportionately affecting Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American communities,” attests ASPHO Board of Trustees President Jorge Di Paola, MD, noting “Many patients in pediatric hematology/oncology have long suffered the impact of these inequalities, affecting their care and outcomes.”

The Presidential Symposium brings attention to the primary forces affecting pediatric patients with cancer and blood disorders. President Di Paola will moderate the symposium on Thursday, April 22, as Dr. Allison King, MD PhD MPH, addresses the impact of healthcare disparities in hematology, with an emphasis on patients with sickle cell disease, and Dr. Smita Bhatia, MD MPH, discusses disparities in cancer outcomes among children, including a focus on understanding the causes of disparity in these outcomes. Both speakers will present the results of their extensive scientific research efforts to overcome these disparities. Dr. King is a professor of pediatrics, medicine, occupational therapy, surgery (Division of Public Health Science), and education at Washington University in Saint Louis. Dr. Bhatia is a professor of pediatrics and the director of the Institute for Cancer Outcomes and

Survivorship in the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Medicine. She is also the vice chair for outcomes in the Department of Pediatrics and associate director of cancer outcomes research at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and a previous recipient of ASPHO's Frank A. Oski Memorial Lectureship Award. Dr. Di Paola is recognized globally for his expertise in pediatric blood disorders and serves as director of the pediatric Division of Hematology & Oncology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

ASPHO's commitment to overcome disparities is prevalent throughout its organizational values, structure, and programming. In 2020, the Society published a [statement](#) condemning racism and supporting healthcare equity. ASPHO's [diversity statement](#) welcomes diverse and inclusive participation within the profession of pediatric hematology/oncology and the Society's membership. The Society's volunteer Diversity Advisory Group advises the Board of Trustees on the needs and opportunities for promoting diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency within the Society, and provides a platform for a member-driven Diversity Special Interest Group.

Founded in 1981, the American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology (ASPHO) advances research, education, treatment, and professional practice in support of pediatric hematology/oncology specialists and other practicing professionals who are dedicated to the optimal care of children, adolescents and young adults with blood disorders and cancer. The [ASPHO Conference](#) is the flagship education conference for pediatric hematology/oncology subspecialists, where leading experts and thought leaders present clinical and scientific developments, career development and networking programs to advance the field. ASPHO sponsors additional educational and professional development programs and co-sponsors *Pediatric Blood & Cancer*. For more information, visit www.aspho.org, and contact ASPHO at info@aspho.org or 847-375-4716. Follow ASPHO on Twitter at [@aspho_hq](#) and www.Facebook.com/aspho.org.

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