



## AAP-CA2 Board of Directors 2018 - 2020

The AAP-CA2 Board of Directors consists of an Executive Board: President, Vice President (Transitions to President on the following term), Treasurer, Secretary and Immediate Past President, plus Members-At-Large and Area Representatives. Area Representatives are appointed by the Chapter president.

### Executive Officers

#### INCOMING PRESIDENT - ALICE KUO, MD, PhD, MBA, FAAP



Dr. Alice Kuo is Professor and Chief of Medicine-Pediatrics at UCLA. She has been on faculty at UCLA since 2000 and has built a career on advocating for child health issues locally and nationally.

From 2005-2008 Dr. Kuo served as the Co-Chair of the Community Pediatrics Training Initiative Executive Committee, and then from 2009-2015 served on the Executive Committee of the Council on Community Pediatrics, and as Policy Chair from 2012-2015. She has co-authored AAP policy statements on community pediatrics, immigrant children, homelessness, food insecurity, poverty, home visiting, health equity and the intersection of pediatrics and public health. In addition to serving as AAP-CA2 vice president for the 2016-18 term, she has also served as our Chapter's CATCH Facilitator since 2004 and has provided technical assistance to dozens of AAP-funded community projects in our chapter.

Dr. Kuo received a B.A. in biology from Harvard University, her M.D. and Ph.D. in educational psychology from UCLA, and M.B.A. from University of Massachusetts Amherst. She completed her combined internal medicine and pediatrics residency training at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and a NRSA Primary Care Health Services Research fellowship at UCLA. Her clinical interests include primary care of individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities and health care transitions for youth with special health care needs.

She is the proud mother of two boys, Matthew (age 10) and Noah (age 6) and spends her weekends with soccer and Little League baseball, Cub Scouts and teaching Sunday School.

## **VICE PRESIDENT - DAMODARA RAJASEKHAR, MD, FAAP**



Damodara Rajasekhar, MD, FAAP is a Pediatrician in solo practice from Apple Valley, CA. He also provides neonatal ICU care in Victorville, CA. He is married and has two children, and three grandchildren.

After completing residency in Pediatrics from University of Connecticut Medical Center, he also completed fellowship in Neonatal Perinatal Medicine from University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He is Board certified in both Pediatrics, and Neonatal/Perinatal medicine. After completing fellowship in Massachusetts, he worked in Kentucky for two years before starting a solo pediatric practice in California in 1996.

Dr. Rajasekhar served on the AAP-CA2 board for many years as the San Bernardino/High Desert Area Representative. He also served as a member of the AAP-CA2 State Government Affairs (SGA) committee for more than 10 years.

He is a member of Board of Trustees at California Medical Association(CMA), and is the present treasurer for CALPAC (CMA political action committee).

Dr. Rajasekhar is president-elect of San Bernardino County Medical Society and will be installed as President on June 20th, 2018. He served as chief of medical staff at a local hospital and is familiar with hospital-physician interactions related to quality of care provided to patients in California hospitals. He is a member of provider advisory committee (PAC) at Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), which is a Medi-Cal HMO health plan that provides care for more than one million members in San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

His international pediatric experience includes pediatric training, qualifications, and later providing healthcare for children as a licensed physician in India, United Arab Emirates, and United Kingdom for a total of 14 years before starting residency training in Connecticut. His qualifications include DCH (Diploma in Child Health, India), and MRCP (Member of Royal College of Physicians, London).

Dr. Rajasekhar believes in physician-patient relationship as a key factor in providing good health care for our patients. He also believes in the need for physician leadership to advocate for high quality patient care. He is passionate about promoting payment models that will sustain physician practices, which in turn will increase access to care, and always works to promote betterment of the medical profession.

## **TREASURER - GRANT CHRISTMAN, MD, FAAP**



Grant Christman, a pediatric hospitalist and division director of education at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, is a current California Chapter 2 member-at-large. He was previously also the medical director of the chapter's Teen-Parent Safe Driving Partnership, a program funded by a grant from the Allstate Foundation.

Dr. Christman combines his interests in child advocacy and medical education by participating in the district's Legislative Day and leading pediatric residents in trips to legislative offices both in Southern California and Sacramento. He has co-authored a textbook chapter on advocacy and has developed innovative web-based advocacy curricula for the Harbor-UCLA pediatric residency program, as well as for the Los Angeles Health Provider Alliance for Children, a collaboration

between the chapter and CHLA (funded by First 5 LA) to train pediatricians and other healthcare workers in legislative and media advocacy.

As chapter treasurer, Dr. Christman will work together with other board members to ensure that the chapter continues to be financially healthy and a good steward of its resources, including member dues and grant funding. He will also focus on engaging trainees, young pediatricians, and hospital-based pediatricians in chapter activities to broaden our membership base.

## **SECRETARY - CLAUDIA WANG, MD, FAAP**



I welcome the opportunity to serve as Secretary for the AAP-CA2. I have spent the past 25+ years at UCLA Medical Center within the division of General Pediatrics. I am board-certified in both pediatrics as well as child abuse pediatrics. My current positions include Pediatric Consultant for the UCLA TIES for Families foster care/adopt program, and Medical Director of the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect team.

Development of child abuse teaching curriculums for training healthcare providers within the UCLA Health system as well as social workers within the LA County Department of Children and Family Services is one area where I have focused my creative efforts. Foster care is another area I am passionate about and I provide pediatric consultation for complex foster care children as well as training to prospective foster/adopt caregivers on topics such as prenatal drug exposure.

Recent publications have included the 2017 American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Practice Guidelines on Munchausen by Proxy (MBP). The National Guidelines were developed by a Taskforce of specialists with knowledge in this type of child abuse. While

working on this Taskforce I also collaborated with a specialist at Stanford and our article to provide diagnostic aid to identify simulation and/or induction in cases of MBP was also published.

Serving as Secretary I look forward to working with the Board and others in our Chapter to increase our visibility locally, regionally and nationally.

On a personal note, I am married with teenagers and enjoy spending time with the family in sunny California.

## **MEMBERS - AT - LARGE**

### **DAFNA AHDOOT, MD, FAAP**



Thank you for the opportunity to run for the AAP-CA2 board of directors Member-at-Large. My name is Dafna Ahdoot and I'm very excited to be involved with the chapter and with the growing pediatrician community.

As a mom, pediatrician, wife and homemaker I'm familiar with the balancing act that many of us pediatricians experience on a daily basis. Trying to juggle our careers and personal lives can be challenging especially in our fast-paced society. It's tough to connect with colleagues, fulfill our maintenance of certification, and stay up to date on pediatric medicine in order to provide the best care for our patients. My goal in becoming MAL is to help members of our chapter network with each other by increasing our interaction on social media, reaching out to more members and increase attendance at town hall meetings. Specifically, I would create surveys for our community to evaluate what they want to learn about, discover what challenges they face and facilitate webinars or meetings to address these interests and concerns. I'm particularly interested in hosting town hall meetings as a way to meet new members and discuss pediatric medicine or any recent pediatric guidelines or news.

I'm a pediatrician practicing at Roy Medical Group, a MediCal office in Van Nuys and I live in Encino with my husband and 2 girls. I graduated from MCP Hahnemann in Philadelphia in 2008 and completed my Pediatrics residency at LAC USC in 2011. I'm a general pediatrician and worked at various offices in the LA county while seeing newborns at Providence Tarzana Medical Center. In my spare time I love learning new forms of dance, discovering a new love for learning the piano, cooking and hiking with my family.

## **CYNTHIA BAKER, MD, FAAP**



I have been a MAL for almost 8 years. It was my first real entry to AAP service after being a member since residency. I grew up in Philadelphia, did undergraduate and medical school at the University of Pennsylvania (go Quakers!), and came to CHLA for residency/Chief residency. I moved across the street to Kaiser Permanente LA and have been there ever since as a general pediatrician. I have been very involved in faculty, resident and medical student education, served as Associate Residency Program Director for over 20 years, CME chair for over 30 years, and on our multidisciplinary Vascular Birthmark Clinic team for 24 years, among other past and current committee memberships. I continue to have a busy clinical practice and enjoy working with my patients, families and colleagues.

I have served on our AAP Chapter 2 membership and CME committees, and our Fit to Play and Learn program. I serve on COPAM, a national AAP committee on practice and ambulatory management and have been involved in collaborating on multiple clinical guidelines (Visual Assessment, Periodicity schedule/Bright Futures, Infantile Hemangioma among others). I have attended every board meeting, a few by phone, but most in person. I would continue on the membership and CME committees and the FTPL program. I enjoy CME so would continue working on our Symposium and periodic meetings, (Town Halls). I am happy to serve in any area needed by our Executive Board. I am honored to serve my AAP colleagues in Chapter 2.

## **CORI CROSS, MD, FAAP**



Cori Cross is a board certified pediatrician at Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). She has been an active member of California Chapter 2 (CA-2) for 10 years, both as a Member-at-Large and most recently as Treasurer. During this time, she co-created the Fit to Play and Learn Obesity Prevention Curriculum that is now taught in many LAUSD schools. She participated in multiple Walk to School programs and spoke at many public schools about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. In 2017, she was awarded the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA) Community Volunteer Award.

As a Member-At-Large Dr. Cross will continue to address the needs of our local community through volunteer efforts, as well as meet the needs of our Chapter 2 members. During her time on CA-2 board, she has held Westside Town Hall meetings to engage membership in AAP activities and to provide free lectures on interesting topics. She is committed to continuing to provide yearly Westside activities to better serve the membership in this area. She

would also like to continue to bring her work for the National AAP back to pediatricians here in Los Angeles.

Dr. Cross is a member of the National AAP's Council on Communications and Media (COCM) and has served two terms on the Executive Committee. In addition, she is an AAP spokesperson. As such she does media interviews on behalf of the AAP. She is a repeat medical expert on Los Angeles' CBS news, and a regular guest on RadioMD's Healthy Children. She was a lead author on the AAP's "Media Use in School-Aged Children and Adolescents" as well as the accompanying technical report "Children and Adolescents and Digital Media." This has led to her partnering with Common Sense Media locally to give panel discussions on Screens and Children and nationally to develop resources for pediatricians to address these issues in their offices. In 2017, she won an Outstanding Achievement in Innovation Award from the AAP for her work in creating the Family Media Use Plan toolkit on HealthyChildren.org. She will continue to work on these issues at a national level and to bring this expertise back to our local community by working with community partners.

Dr. Cross graduated cum laude from Barnard College with a BA in philosophy. She attended The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, where she obtained her M.D. and was elected to the AOA honor society. She then moved to L.A. with her husband where she did her pediatric residency at CHLA. She currently lives in the Pacific Palisades with her husband and three children.

#### **NNEKA EDWARDS-JACKSON, MD, FAAP**



My name is Nneka Edwards-Jackson, M.D. I am very excited to be a part of the AAP-CA2 Board of Directors (BOD) as a Member-at-Large (MAL) for the 2018-2020 term. I received my medical degree from Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons and underwent pediatric residency training at University of California San Francisco. After residency, I spent fifteen months working at an under-resourced referral hospital in Sub-saharan Africa. I have been working for the past year as a Pediatric Hospitalist at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

Over the next two years, I plan to have an active role in the chapter and hope to provide a unique perspective to the chapter leadership. I hope to recruit and engage other early-career pediatricians in Southern California, not only to improve chapter membership but also to prepare future leaders of the chapter. I plan to organize Town Halls related to health equity and that aim to keep our chapter members up to date on the social issues that threaten our patients' health. Lastly, as a pediatrician working in the emerging specialty of pediatric hospital medicine, I hope to advocate for educational opportunities in this field, both to help those seeking certification in

pediatric hospital medicine, and to benefit all chapter members who care for complex patients at risk for hospitalization.

**PALLAVI KAMRA, MD, FAAP**



It gives me immense pride to be a member of the California Chapter 2 of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which has consistently been voted as one of the best across the nation. It is a rewarding experience to work with a group of pediatricians that are devoted and dedicated to improving the health of all children.

My training from Kasturba Medical College, India for medical school and the University of Minnesota for residency and chief residency has provided me with the knowledge, compassion and work ethic to constantly strive for excellence in healthcare. I hope to hone these skills and learn more from the experts in the chapter, all the while working to advance the well being of children.

Being a Member-At-Large will give me the opportunity to contribute to the Academy in a more meaningful manner. I look forward to engaging fellow pediatricians in the work of the chapter and spreading awareness regarding ongoing projects. Additionally, as a pediatrician working at a federally qualified health center, I bring a unique perspective to the board. I am cognizant of the challenges experienced by the underserved population that I cater to, as well as those faced by the physicians who care for them. Having a position in the board will allow me to advocate for a healthier future for our most vulnerable children.

As a famous African proverb aptly puts it, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. I hope to go far, carrying the mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics with me.

**MONA PATEL, MD, FAAP**



Mona Patel, MD, FAAP, is an attending physician in the Division of General Pediatrics at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, and is CHLA’s Director of Operations for the outpatient General Pediatrics clinics based in a federally qualified health center (FQHC) system and in the communities of Los Angeles. She is an Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Dr. Patel joined the General Pediatrics faculty at CHLA in October 2007. She attended UC Irvine for undergraduate studies and the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine for her medical degree. She returned to

Los Angeles to complete her pediatric residency training at CHLA from 2003-2006, and proudly served as a chief resident at CHLA from 2006-2007. She is the recipient of the Steven M. Thompson Loan Repayment scholarship in 2009, the Barbara Korsch Award in 2009, and the Calvin Sia Award for Pediatric Leadership in Pediatric Medical Home and Advocacy by the National American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in 2017.

She is currently a board member of American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) chapter 2, and the State Governmental Affairs co-chair for AAP-CA. She uses her experience in education, advocacy, community pediatrics and complex care to benefit the academy and its members. Dr. Patel serves as the principal investigator for the First 5 LA grant funded in 2014 for Early Identification of and Referrals to Early Intervention Services for Autism and Other Developmental Delays, which promotes the standardization and operationalization of developmental screenings for all children served in outpatient pediatric clinics. She works to innovate, lead and advocate for models of healthcare for the most vulnerable children in Los Angeles, California. These efforts include building data integration model support structures to review expansive health care utilization for children served by Medicaid and Title V programs.

### **MELISSA RUIZ, MD, MPH, FAAP**



Melissa has been involved with the AAP since initiating her journey in Pediatrics. She is a graduate of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and while she had a 3-year foray into General Surgery, she found her true calling when she started her Pediatrics residency at the University of Illinois Chicago. During residency, she served on the Illinois Chapter of the AAP Obesity Prevention Committee, the advisory group for Sugar-Sweetened Beverages - Rethink Your Drink Campaign, and as the CATCH resident liaison. She received the District VI SOMSRFT Advocacy Champion Award and her

Master's degree in Public Health during her time as chief resident. Having completed her training, California beckoned her back. Within weeks of moving back to Southern California, she joined AAP Chapter 2 and started as the Early Career Physician representative on the board. Near the end of her completion of the Southern California Community Medicine Fellowship, she obtained a CATCH grant geared toward connecting Pasadena Unified youth with medical homes. She now serves on the State Government Affairs Committee and as the Early Career Physician Assistant District IX Representative. In this capacity, she was able to contribute to feedback given directly to national AAP leadership during the 2017 AAP NCE and will be meeting with legislators at this upcoming AAP Legislative Day.

I am committed to the AAP and am honored to serve on the executive board of AAP Chapter 2.



## **KENNETH SAUL, MD, FAAP**



I have been in private practice in Thousand Oaks for 36 years and have served on the Chapter 2 Board the last 10 years. In that time I have tried to be the voice of the independent private practice trying to stay a viable practice option amidst all the tremendous economic pressures that seem to favor large entities. I have no problem with the existence of large corporate and university based quality practices, but we need to fight for a level economic playing field so patients continue to have a choice between the large entity and a smaller personalized independent practice. I am just about preserving patient choice.

During my 10 years on the board, other than fighting for the causes of the independent practice, I have set up a series of Town Hall meetings 3-4 times per year for all of us to discuss the hot medical and business topics of the quarter and keep us all informed and help each other in our quest to do the best we can for our patients. I hope to do the same in my next term, and hopefully the next 30-40 years.

## **LEILA YOONESSI, MD, MPH, FAAP**



I plan to contribute to the American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter 2 by optimizing the mental, physical and social health of our infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. By integrating and empowering the community, I strive to share invaluable resources and knowledge. I hope my relationship with several community-based organizations will allow me to share unfiltered perspectives of various community members. I often interact with parents and non-profit organizations in non-clinical settings which has strengthened my relationship with the community. By serving on the board of directors for various of non-profit organizations including Tichenor Orthopedic Clinic,

Breastfeed LA and Claire's Place Foundation, I developed several invaluable relationships with the community. I hope this in turn allows chapter 2 of the AAP to build long and enduring relationships with the community. By utilizing AAP guidelines, I strive to practice and advocate for evidence based medicine. I strongly believe the social and political climate has intensified and escalated several salient pediatric issues including suicide, depression, gun-violence and bullying. I hope by standing together and connecting with key members of our community we continue to serve as health care advocates our youth.

I will gladly act as a liaison between membership in my geographic area and the board. I regularly connect with several pediatricians in my geographic region and we share clinical cases and practice strategies to improve our quality of care. I hope to share their

perspectives, because I have colleagues in a vast array of clinical settings. I am passionate about staying active and in touch the pediatric community. We constantly challenge each other to adopt new and innovative practices in order to optimize the care of our patients. I will gladly meet with members in my area to review needs, problems, and concerns. I would also like to reach out to new pediatricians to encourage AAP membership. Together, we can be a voice for developing policies and improving our health care system. With a background in public health, I strive to enact positive change on a community level with the help of the AAP chapter 2. [Read my Biography](#)

### **TRACY ZASLOW, MD, FAAP, CAQSM**



Dr. Tracy L. Zaslow, a board-certified pediatrician, completed her pediatrics residency and additional Chief Resident year at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. She holds a certificate of added qualification in Primary Care Sports Medicine after completing a two-year fellowship in Primary Care Sports Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles. Currently, at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles Children’s Orthopedic Center (COC), she is the Director of the Sports

Concussion Program and Medical Director of the Sports Medicine Program. She has been an active member of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) since completing residency and, in conjunction with AAP, she and a colleague have developed an anti-obesity program that has educated youth throughout the Southern California region. She has served as Member-At-Large since 2012 and looks forward to the opportunity to continue in this role advocating for pediatricians and pediatric specialists. Additionally, she serves on the California Interscholastic Federation Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, as past-president Los Angeles Pediatric Society Board, and as Team Physician for the Men’s League Soccer LA Galaxy team.