



Pediatric Advocacy Roundtable

Eliza Agrest Varadi, MD

Katie Schafer, DO

Christoph Diasio, MD FAAP

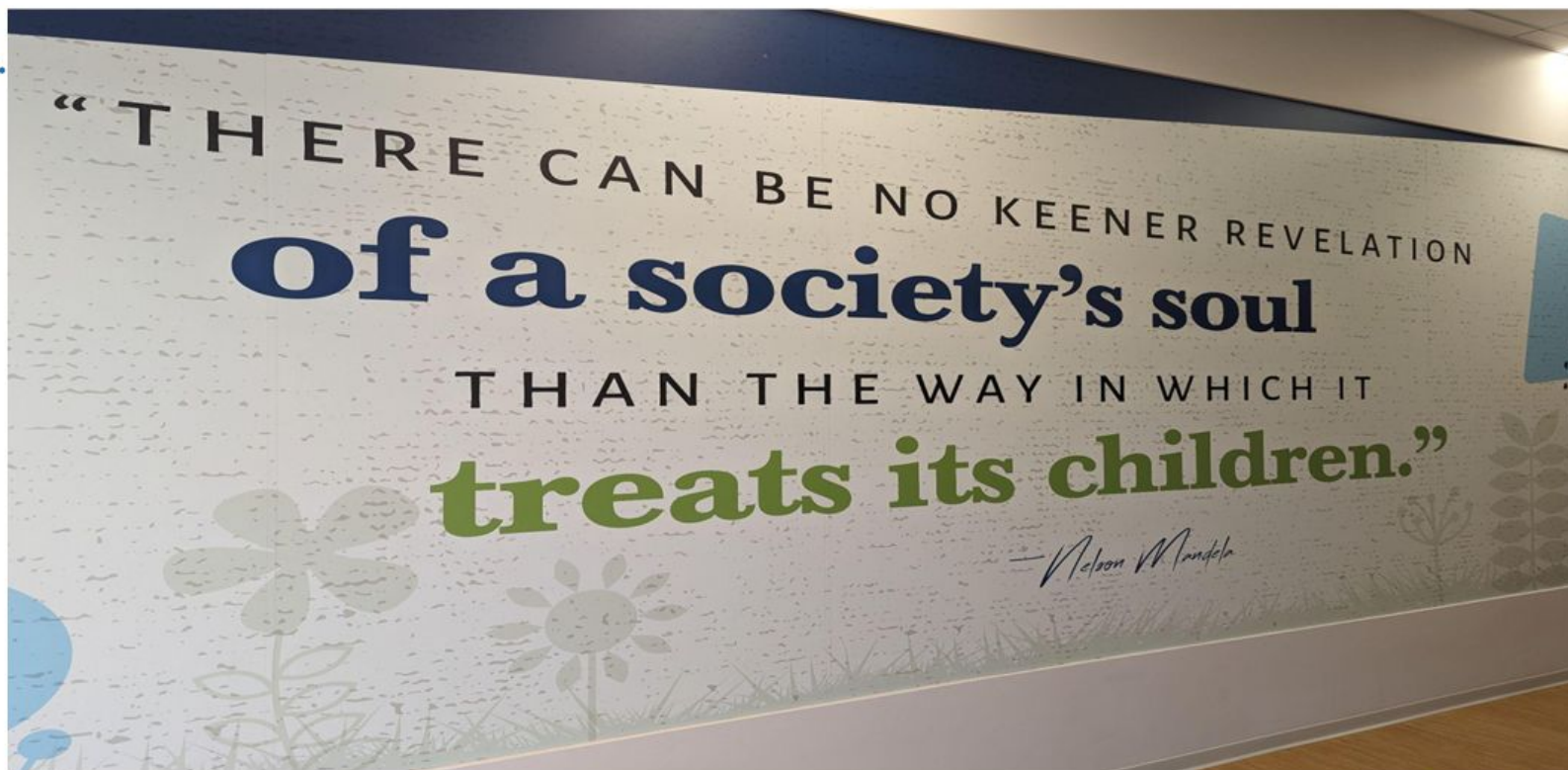
Ceilidh Kiegle





1. Please hold questions and comments until prompted.
2. Each speaker will share a personal advocacy story
3. Each speaker will share an aspirational advocacy wish/goal
4. There will be an opportunity after each panelist speaks to ask questions and share your own stories!







STEPS TO ADVOCACY



1. Pick 1-3 topics you are truly passionate about
2. Learn the facts - be first - be clear - be concise - be calm
3. Share a personal story about your advocacy interests
4. Make connections - know your politicians - make them know you as “the healthcare resource” for them

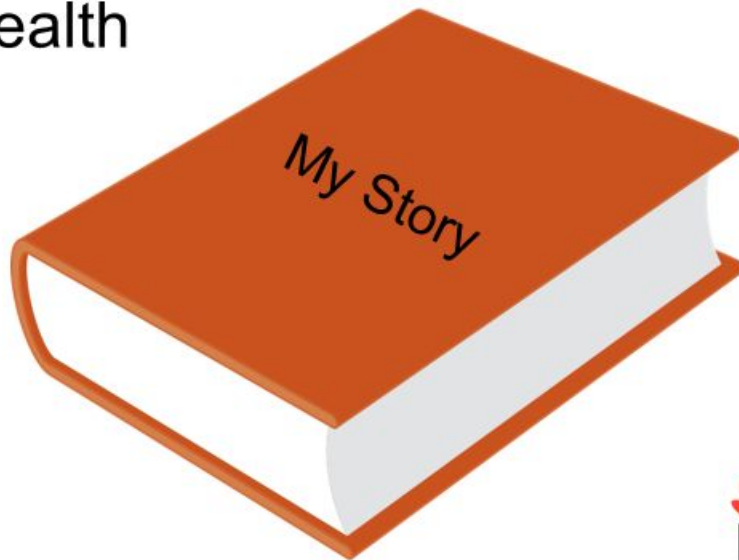


"Fight for the things
that you care about,
but do it in a way
that will lead others
to join you."

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

My Advocacy Topics

1. Medicaid & Healthcare Financing
2. Immigrant Health
3. Vaccines
4. Social Determinants of Health
5. Breastfeeding Advocacy





THEN....



Departure Number
359839206 01

Immigration and Naturalization Service
I-94
Departure Record

ADMITTED AS A REFUGEE
PURSUANT TO SEC. 307 OF
THE ISIA ACT. IF YOU DE-
PART THE U.S., YOU WILL
NEED PRIOR PERMISSION
FROM INS TO RETURN.
EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZED

NYC 5/19/89 1835

4. Family Name
AGREST

5. First (Given) Name
ELIZA

7. Country of Citizenship
USSR

16. Birth Date (Day/Mo/Yr)
1.8.02.81

See Other Side STAPLE HERE

NOW...

by Erin Post ■ Mar 2021

Dr. Eliza Varadi, the owner of Pelican Pediatrics in Charleston, South Carolina, is committed to making sure patients who may have been marginalized in the past have access to the health care they deserve.

Select NEWS

Helping providers stay ahead

CLAS Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services

A United Voice for Multicultural Health Care

PHYSICIAN CHAMPION

We'd like to spotlight and thank Eliza Varadi, M.D., a First Choice provider at Pelican Pediatrics in Charleston who speaks Russian, Spanish and Hebrew as well as English. "Having come to this country as an immigrant, I know how difficult it is to navigate everything in a different language and culture. The more I can alleviate that stress for my patients, the better."



Being able to communicate and understand health information is necessary to stay healthy. That's why language services are part of our Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) program. For 10 years, Select Health has worked to reduce health care disparities by better understanding the unique backgrounds and cultures of our members. First Choice is the only health plan in South Carolina to achieve the Multicultural Health Care Distinction by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

Dr. Eliza Varadi, the owner of Pelican Pediatrics, speaks English, Russian, Hebrew and Spanish. A second full-time pediatrician speaks Spanish. The practice's part-time pediatrician speaks Punjabi. The practice's administrator, Vladimir Varadi (Dr. Varadi's husband), speaks Russian, Estonian and German. Staff members are from Russia, Estonia, India, Mexico, Panama and Ireland. A part-time nurse practitioner is African American and she also speaks Spanish. The group represents three different religions.

The diversity of the team is intentional, says Dr. Varadi, as the patients they serve in Charleston, S.C., reflect a multitude of backgrounds and life experiences.

"It's always been my goal to be able to serve as large and diverse of a community as I can," says Dr. Varadi. "Especially a community that may otherwise be





Pelican Pediatrics

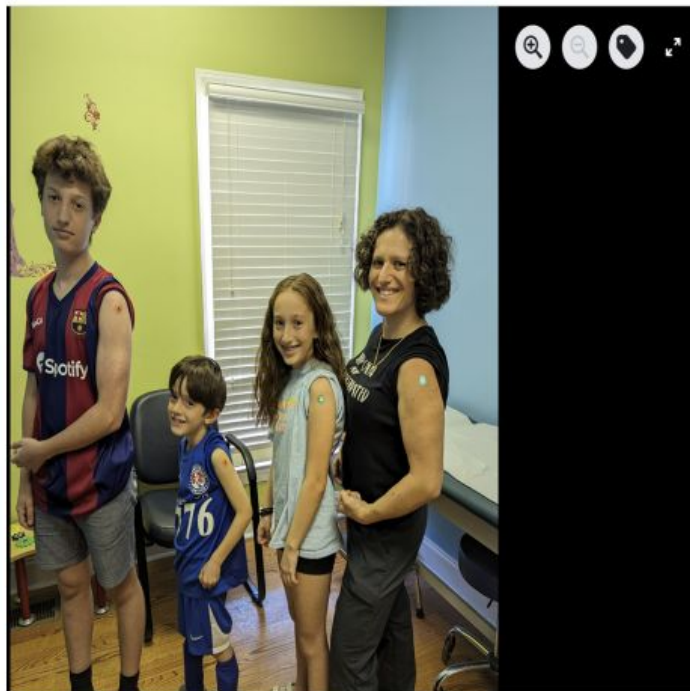
September 17, 2020 · 🌐

...

It's better to get the Flushot with your family, than to get the FLU with your family!

Es mejor recibir la vacuna contra la influenza con toda su familia que enfermarse con la influenza con toda su familia!

Лучше сделать прививку от гриппа вместе со всей семьёй, чем болеть гриппом вместе со всей своей семьёй!



Pelican Pediatrics

October 4, 2023 · 🌐

...

It's better to get the Flushot with your family, than to get the FLU with your family!

Es mejor recibir la vacuna contra la influenza con toda su familia que enfermarse con la influenza con toda su familia!

Лучше сделать прививку от гриппа вместе со всей семьёй, чем болеть гриппом вместе со всей своей семьёй!

Come to our FLU clinic this Saturday 10-1 to protect your family! Call us to sign up

Edit

👍❤️ 21



Pediatric EHR Solutions



Op-Eds and Media Presence

Make contact with news stations – they love having a go-to person to call on a whim – be ready when they call
Know your stuff – have some quotable “one-liners”

Op- Eds – AAP has staff ready to help – just remember you’re always speaking as you “A pediatrician in _____” not an organization (unless specifically advised to do so)

Do Background research
Have some quotable “one-liners”





AI Overview

Dr. Eliza Varadi is a Charleston, SC-based pediatrician and the immunization chair for the South Carolina chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). She is a prominent voice in public health, having served as an expert commentator and advocate for vaccination during recent measles outbreaks in the state. [Post and Courier +3](#)

Dr. Varadi's key efforts and insights include:

- **Outbreak Advocacy:** During the major Upstate SC measles outbreak—which resulted in nearly 1,000 cases before ending in April—Dr. Varadi spoke publicly about how vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, and dropping herd immunity rates allowed the virus to spread rapidly through close-knit communities. [Post and Courier +4](#)
- **Rebuttal to Policy Changes:** She has also been a vocal advocate for pediatricians, pushing back against CDC vaccine changes that she and other experts worried could disrupt care. [Post and Courier](#)
- **Vaccination Guidance:** Dr. Varadi strongly promotes the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, emphasizing that it is over 97% effective and a crucial tool in protecting communities. [Post and Courier +1](#)

Ask anything



6 sites

DPH Announces Measles Case in Midlands, Unrelated to Upstate ...

Measles virus can remain infectious in the air for up to two hours after the sick person is gone from the area. People with measles...

South Carolina Department of Pub...

Pediatricians and advocates push back against new CDC ...

Jan 19, 2026 — Eliza Varadi remembers being shocked when she and her soccer teammates were told they...

Post and Courier

Officials work to contain SC measles outbreak - Post and Courier

Dec 21, 2025 — Vaccine hesitancy on the rise ... And only a bare majority of Republicans, 52 percent,...

Post and Courier

Show all

“It is not enough, however, to work at the individual bedside in the hospital. In the near or dim future, the pediatrician is to sit in and control school boards, health departments, and legislatures. He is a legitimate advisor to the judge and jury, and a seat for the physician in the councils of the republic is what the people have a right to demand.”

—Abraham Jacobi, MD
FATHER OF AMERICAN PEDIATRICS





IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME

Katie Schafer, DO









MISSION & PURPOSE FIRST

- If you define your mission and purpose first, the rest follows easily
- Before we say “Yes!”
- We ask ourselves “Who do we want to be?”





YOU NEED A STORY TO TELL

- Gather attention on social media
- Funding opportunities
- Developing a cast of characters
 - i.e. your employees!





**MEET PEOPLE
EXACTLY WHERE THEY ARE**

TAKE A WALK IN THEIR SHOES







Pediatric EHR Solutions





Fixing VFC influenza delay

Christoph Diasio MD FAAP
Sandhills Pediatrics PLLC



Pediatric EHR Solutions





VFC Flu vaccine delivery was the #1 complaint on SOAPM every Fall

Define the problem

Explore the problem

Frame the problem- bureaucratic health care disparity!

AAP advocacy- CEO/CDC call - master class in advocacy





Disparate Timing In the Delivery of Influenza Vaccine In Pediatric Offices

March 2011 Conference: 45rd National Immunization Conference 2011 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Authors: Elizabeth Sobczyk Christoph Diasio

Background: Children who receive Vaccines for Children (VFC) influenza vaccine are less likely to be immunized than their privately insured counterparts. There is also evidence that administering vaccine in September and October saves \$6-9 million annually. Due to additional distribution steps, VFC vaccine may be shipped later than privately purchased vaccine. Delays in VFC vaccine delivery create a disparity of care and place an extra burden on pediatric practices.

Objectives: To assess the difference in the timing of VFC and privately purchased influenza vaccine delivery to private pediatric offices. **Methods:** In November 2010, a geographically diverse convenience sample of approximately 800 pediatricians was asked to complete a web-based survey. Physicians were asked to provide the exact date of delivery for their first shipment of VFC and privately purchased influenza vaccine. **Results:** Fifty-seven pediatricians in 24 states completed the survey. The difference between mean first delivery date of VFC and private multidose vaccine is 4 weeks; between VFC and private preservative free vials is 4.5 weeks; between VFC and private FluMist is 6 weeks. Although many states only had 1 respondent, several state-level observations were made.





Five states (IL, PA, NY, NJ, and MD) received VFC influenza vaccine 6-12 weeks later than privately purchased vaccine. Three states (TN, NC and WA) did not report similar relative delays. North Carolina received VFC vaccine as early as privately purchased vaccine but in small shipments.

Conclusions: In this limited sample, the delivery of VFC vaccine lagged behind that of privately purchased vaccines, yet state-level variability exists. This variability appears to be, in part, due to state-level ordering and distribution practices, creating disparity in care. States who distribute vaccine efficiently should share best practices with other VFC grantees.





Find Partners in Advocacy

AAP

NC Immunization Branch

AIM

CDC

PCC



November 2, 2015

VFC Vaccine Survey

About a year ago, I posted a link to a survey for anyone here who gives VFC vaccines. If you do, *please* take 3 minutes to [respond to this](#). The AAP is working hard to get VFC flu shot distribution fixed.

I'll let Dr. Diasio speak for himself.

We are continuing to try to improve the distribution of VFC flu vaccine so that VFC eligible children can get flu vaccine at the same time as privately insured children.

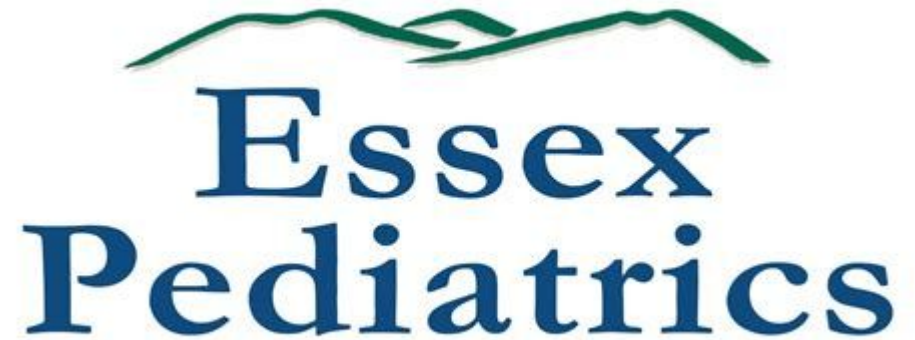
Please help us fix this bureaucratic Healthcare Disparity by completing this survey- even if your state is perfect, please share that information so we can show your state as a good example.



Advocacy and EHRs



Project Background

The logo for Essex Pediatrics features a green mountain range silhouette above the text "Essex Pediatrics" in a blue serif font.



Drilling Down - Project Example

1. Pediatric Mental Health Access
2. Integrating Mental Health services at a Pediatric Practice
3. Mental health visits, internal referrals, grant requests, collaboration between providers for coordinated care
4. Mental health charts, referrals, mental health service reporting, waiting lists...



Drilling Back Up

1. In-EHR Mental Health Waiting List
2. Less time spent making their own wait list, easier access to up-to-date reporting, built-in internal referral process
3. More time with patients or working to improve mental health offerings
4. (Hopefully) more kids getting access to needed mental health services



Drilling Down

1. Identify the big issue
2. Identify how that issue shows up in a pediatric practice
3. Identify how the impact on the pediatric practice determines their workflows
4. Identify how those workflows are used in an EHR



Common Advocacy Issues

- Healthcare Access/Coverage
 - ensure access to high quality, age appropriate, affordable coverage for all kids
- Mental and Emotional Development
 - support a comprehensive approach that includes; prevention, early treatment, crisis response
- Firearm Violence Prevention
 - address firearm violence as a public health issue
- Vaccines
 - ensure communities are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases, be a trusted source of information
- Patient/Physician Relationship
 - speak out against policies that threaten the trusted relationship between a patient and their physician
- Online Protections
 - support policies that protect young people online
- Immigrant Child Health
 - speak out against policies that are detrimental to immigrant child health



10 Steps for Community Advocacy

1. Identify the problem
2. Define the baseline
3. Learn the literature
4. Explore existing resources
5. Develop your road map
6. Build a coalition or engage with community partner(s)
7. Ensure things are done WITH the community
8. Work diligently to accomplish goals and objectives
9. Develop tools for effective evaluation
10. Regularly re-evaluate and reflect on plan and project related work

Source: https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/CommunityAdvocacyGrantsPrimer_Handout.pdf

Asking Questions:

Virtual attendees: Use the chat if you have a question that you want answered

In-person attendees: Go to the stationary microphone in your room.

CEUs:

You can request CEU codes for qualifying sessions using the form PCC shares out at the conclusion of the conference.



Open Discussion

What advocacy issue do you want to address?

Do you connect with the stories shared?

What makes you feel inspired?

What are your blockers?

Are you missing information or resources?

How can we find time for advocacy?



Session Takeaways

- Advocacy opportunities are available to all, seek them out near you!
- Advocacy can be direct or indirect
- Stay in touch with your community, local and national
- Anything is enough, find your platform
- Taking action can inspire others



Pediatric Advocacy Resources

AAP Advocacy Hub:

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/>

AAP Community Health and Advocacy Grant

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/community-health-and-advocacy/>

PCC's Advocacy Blog

<https://blog.pcc.com/tag/patient-advocacy>



**Please complete the course
survey in the UC App.**

