

# UST Pediatrics Interest Group: Employing student-led discussions to gain further understanding of health disparities in pediatrics

Poster: Lea Murphy<sup>1</sup>, Julia Neri<sup>2</sup>

Presenters: Zachary Yannes<sup>1</sup>, Karla Palma<sup>3</sup>

Team Leads: Ellie Songer<sup>1</sup>, Eamon Whelan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Quinnipiac PA Program; <sup>2</sup>UConn School of Medicine; <sup>3</sup>UConn School of Nursing; <sup>4</sup>UConn School of Dental Medicine

## Background

- The Urban Service Track/ AHEC Scholars Program Interest Groups were designed to provide scholars with the opportunity to focus deeply on a topic/population of interest while working with students from various health professions.
- This year, the interest groups were tasked with learning more about inequities in social determinants of health that put certain racial and ethnic groups at risk within their topic/ patient population.
- The Pediatric Interest Group focused on the pediatric population, ranging from embryology to early adolescence.

## Objectives

- To gain more knowledge about special considerations and challenges associated with caring for pediatric patients, specifically through the lens of addressing racial inequality.
- To learn more about “hot topics” in pediatrics that may not be covered in our programs’ curriculums.
- To emphasize in all conversations how we can work towards health equity and specifically serve communities of color by consulting with experts in the field and through our own research.
- To foster leadership, creativity, and teamwork among the students from all the health professions represented: medicine, dental medicine, physician assistant, nursing, social work, and pharmacy.

## Methods

- Host monthly, student-led meetings for students in Urban Service Track Cohort 14 and 15 who are interested in pediatrics.
- Encourage students to give presentations on topics that they are interested in.
- Organize guest speakers from experts in the field of pediatrics to speak at meetings.
- Explore each chosen topic through the lens of race.

## Results

- During the 2021-2022 academic year, the Pediatric Interest Group met for five meetings.
- Throughout the meetings, multiple students led presentations and hosted subsequent discussions about important topics in the field of pediatrics.
- Guest speakers were recruited to provide expert content and advice: Jelena MacLeod, MD, MHS; Lauren Presti, DMD; Thomas Presti, MD; Brendan Campbell, MD, MPH, FACS
- The presentations included interactive components such as Kahoot!, Poll Everywhere, and informal question and answer segments.
- Resources, including copies of Powerpoint presentations, link to American Academy of Pediatrics Family Media Plan, and JAMA article about increased firearm violence during the pandemic were compiled onto the Pediatrics Interest Group Blackboard page for all group members to access.

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Discussion Topics Throughout 2021/2022

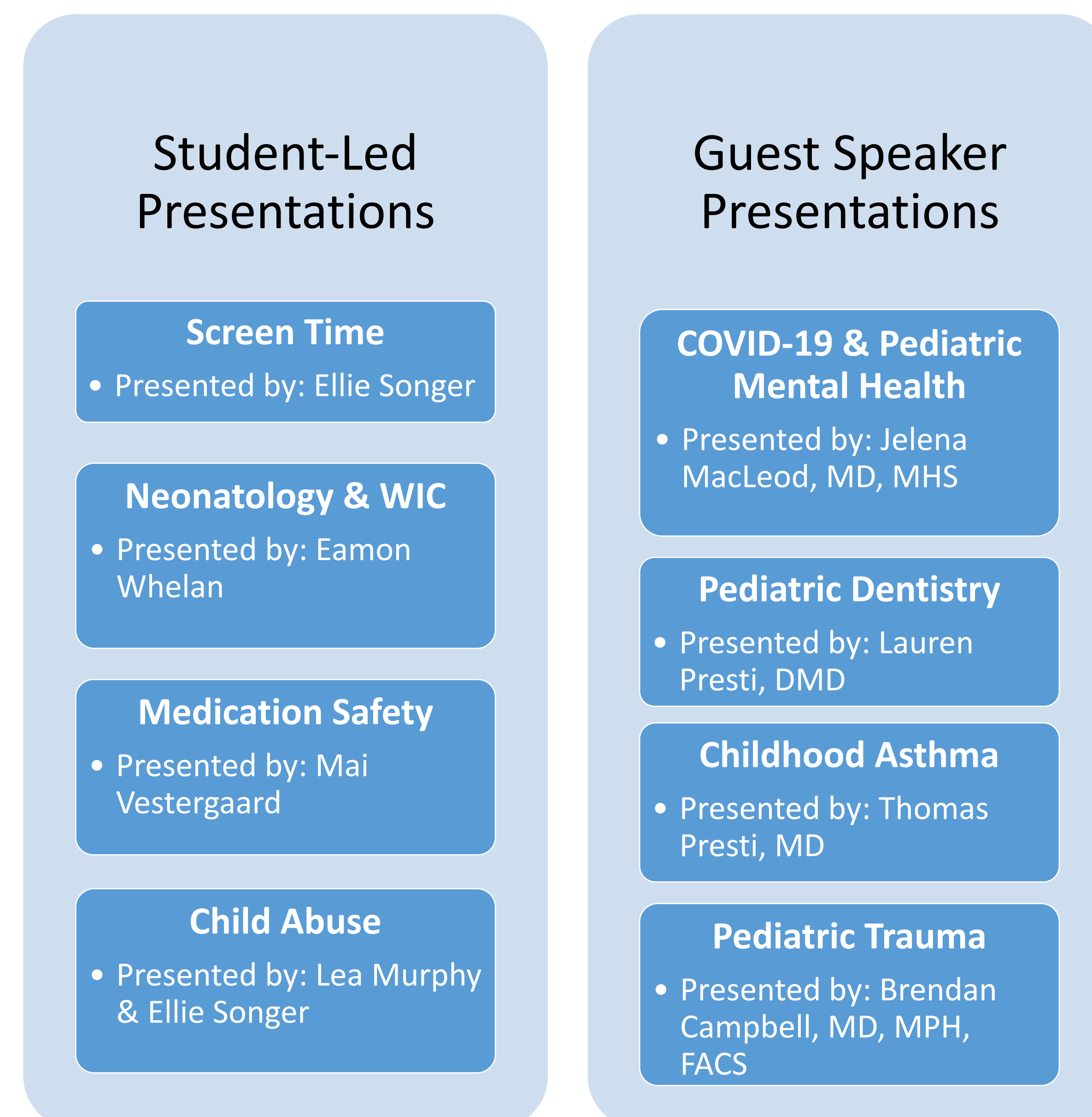


Table 1: Example Learning Points Regarding Racial Inequality Among Various Pediatric Topics

Topic	What We Learned
Neonatology/WIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black infants have inferior health outcomes compared to white infants regardless of provider.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>WIC is associated with improvements in the health in black and Hispanic infants– refer mothers to WIC early!<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
Child Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rates of child abuse are <i>not</i> higher for children of color compared to white children, but abuse of children of color is reported and investigated at much higher rates. This results in higher rates of removal from the home.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
COVID-19 & Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black children were 50% less likely to come to the ED during/after COVID-19 than before COVID, most likely due to lack of access to care.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
Pediatric Dentistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to care is limited by time constraints in preparing healthy food, inability to attend appointments, and in gaps in insurance coverage.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Sociocultural factors contribute to oral health disparities: in a study of African American 12–18-year-olds, perceived threat from oral disease was considered low.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
Childhood Asthma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black American patients are disproportionately diagnosed with asthma versus white patients, and they carry a worse disease burden.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Reasons for such disparities include access to care and exposure to pollution (both occupational and at home).<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Steps to work toward: reduce exposures to pollutions &amp; reform policies in health care, labor, and housing to reduce inequity.<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
Pediatric Trauma	

## Discussion

- The interprofessional component of the Pediatric Interest Group allowed students to each share their unique experiences during the various topics of conversation.
- Students in the group responded positively to the overall experience of the Pediatric Interest Group.

## Conclusion and Future Direction

- The Pediatric Interest Group achieved its overall objective to gain more knowledge about pediatric topics through the lens of how racial injustices result in health inequity, as well as to educate ourselves about steps we can advocate for to reduce the disparities affecting patients of color.

## References

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- Murphy, L & Songer, E. Child abuse. Lecture presented at December IG meeting.
- Smitherman, L. C., Golden, W. C., & Walton, J. R. (2021). Health Disparities and Their Effects on Children and Their Caregivers During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. *Pediatric clinics of North America*, 68(5), 1133–1145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2021.05.013>
- Presti, L. Pediatric dentistry. Lecture presented at February IG meeting.
- Presti, T. Childhood asthma. Lecture presented at February IG meeting.

## Acknowledgements

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