Highlights from the Paediatric and Congenital Interventional Cardiology Early-Career Society (PICES) 2019 Activities

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The Paediatric and congenital Interventional Cardiology Early-career Society (PICES) was established in late 2011 to provide resources and a forum for paediatric cardiac interventionalists early in their career [1, 2]. The mission of PICES is to foster academic and clinical advancement of early career congenital interventional cardiologists through collaborative education, research, and networking. PICES is a special interest group of the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI) and has multiple previous and current PICES executive committee members on the Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) council of SCAI. Currently the society consists of more than 200 members scattered across the globe.

The PICES executive committee through September 2019 was composed of President – Ryan Callahan, MD (Boston Children’s Hospital), Vice President (Research) – Gurumurthy Hiremath, MD (University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital), Vice President (Clinical) – Sara Trucco, MD (UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh), and Secretary – Sarosh Batlivala, MD MSCI (Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Centre). Wendy Whiteside, MD (C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital) was elected the new Vice President (Clinical) and Tacy Downing, MD (Children’s National Medical Centre) was elected the new Secretary, both are two-year positions starting in September 2019. In April 2019, Sebastian Góreczny, MD (Polish Mother’s Memorial Hospital) was selected for a new position named the PICES International Delegate.

The primary means of communication between PICES members has been message exchange through a closed internet group listserv. Multiple clinical questions stimulated informative discussions and in several cases led to initiation of research collaboration. The most debated issues in the last year included selection of stents for ductus arteriosus stenting, optimal treatment of abdominal aortic coarctation and bilateral renal artery stenosis, new onset of atrioventricular block with atrial septal defect device closure, post-catheterisation loss of pulse, and administration of vasodilators and novel oral anticoagulants in Fontan patients. Similarly to previous years, several academic activities, presentation opportunities and job postings were shared on the group listserv.

A Mentorship Program championed by Matthew Crystal, MD (Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital) is now in its second class and was continued in the last year. This structured program with educational grant support pairs junior interventionalists with a well-recognised senior mentor. The program ensures the continued progress of interventional congenital cardiology by directly impacting the careers of junior interventionalists and by assisting in developing the next generation of leaders, educators, and innovators in this field. The current class includes four mentor mentee pairs:

- Michael Angtuaco, MD (Arkansas Children’s Hospital) mentored by Evan Zahn, MD (Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute),
The PICES group continued the year with a breakout session entitled “Trials and Tribulations – Establishing a Career as a Paediatric Cardiologist” at the Paediatric and Adult Interventional Cardiac Symposium (PICS-AICS)
in San Diego, CA. The highlight of the session moderated by Ryan Callahan, MD; Sara Trucco, MD, and Gurumurthy Hiremath, MD was the awarding of the second PICES Mentor Award to Lee Benson, MD (SickKids Hospital, Toronto) (Figure 2). Dr. Benson has a record of over 35 years of mentorship to fellows with over 40 directly trained paediatric interventional fellows. He has been an integral part of the PICES Mentorship Program and has always welcomed PICES members at the Toronto Course on Congenital and Structural Heart Disease. The PICES group awarded Dr. Benson for years of unwavering support, mentorship, and guidance to junior interventionists. Two gripping case presentations followed. Jeffrey Darst, MD (Children’s Hospital of Colorado) used his gifted story telling talents to present “Good Thing We Had Two Needles”, setting the tone for an incredibly thought-provoking breakout session. Sanjay Sinha, MD (University of California) followed with his presentation titled “Under Pressure: A Complex Lymphatic Intervention” in which he demonstrated how a junior interventionalists can establish a niche in the field. Next, Carrie Herbert, MD (University of Texas, Southwestern) gave an emotional and inspiring speech on lessons learned through the turbulence of her early career; “What to do when the ‘Fasten Your Seatbelt’ Light Comes On.” The session finished with a keynote speaker Audrey Marshall, MD (Harvard School of Public Health) presenting an eye-opening talk on the different ways of developing one’s professional career; “Am I a tortoise or a hare? The Importance of Pace.”.
PICES @ CSI-San Francisco

The PICES group ended the year with a new opportunity to present cases as invited faculty at the CSI San Francisco conference. Selected by the PICES Executive Committee, five members successfully presented their experience with the following interventions: Case dilemma in < 15 kg atrial septal defect closure – Manish Bansal, MD (Baylor College of Medicine); Case dilemma in an older adult with atrial septal defect closure – Jason Anderson, MD (Mayo Clinic); Ductal stenting complication – Jess Randall, MD (Children’s Hospital of Colorado); Right ventricular outflow tract stenting complication – Konstantin Averin, MD (Stollery Children’s Hospital); Duct closure at < 1000 g – Sarosh Batiliva, MD MSCI; and Arterial duct closure in a patient over 40 years of age – Keeshan Britton, MD (Yale University School of Medicine).

Future perspectives

The year 2020 looks to be even more productive for the PICES group. Similarly to previous years, we plan to host sessions at the main interventional meetings including SCAI, PICS-AICS and CSI Frankfurt. In the autumn we are expecting interesting opportunities for PICES members during CSI America hosted for the first time in Denver, Colorado. We are also planning a PICES session during the Asia Pacific Interventional Cardiology Symposium (APICS) in Seoul, South Korea. Other events for 2020 include electing new Executive Committee members (President, Vice President [research]), pairing more mentors-mentees for the third mentorship program class, and hopefully a very active group listserv!

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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