



Follow-up to the Reach Out and Read Next Chapter Forum

Last year, in celebration of its 30-year anniversary, Reach Out and Read embarked on its Next Chapter Strategy with a mission of maximizing the potential of pediatric primary care to promote the positive interactions that foster healthy development during the critical early years of a child's life.

With a commitment to bringing our experience and the strengths of our network to partnerships with other mission-driven organizations working within and around pediatric primary care, the initiative was officially launched at a Forum on November 6, 2019.

The goals of the Forum were to:

- Bring together leaders in early childhood development focused on the promotion of positive, language-rich parent-child interactions through pediatric primary care
- Set the stage for discussion that generates new and practical solutions to the challenges of making this a standard of care
- Support the testing and scaling of new ideas
- Create a forum for networking and continued connections and collaborations.

The Forum brought together 50 of the ROR Network Leadership, including national board members, the medical advisory board, national staff and affiliate leaders, together with 50 influencers, visionaries and luminaries in primary care, pediatric training and child health transformation, for a day of generative discussion around the promotion of positive parent-child interactions through pediatric primary care.

The Agenda

The agenda was designed with both presentations and workshops/panels to give plenty of opportunity to discuss ideas and consider the various perspectives in the room, and there was a general atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm throughout the day.



Benard Dreyer MD, Reach Out and Read Medical Advisory Committee Member, Professor of Pediatrics, New York University Langone Health, **Andrew Garner MD**, Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, **Perri Klass MD**, ROR Board Member and National Medical Director, Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics, New York University, and **Tom DeWitt MD**, ROR Board Chair, Professor and Associate Chair for Education, Department of Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

The themes raised at the Forum focused on both the incredible potential and the challenges of achieving a bold vision in which:

- Pediatric healthcare providers support positive, language-rich interactions as a standard of care
- Parents and caregivers are well supported as they engage their young children as part of their daily routine and understand the crucial role they play in laying the foundation for healthy development
- All children grow up with books and reading, with talking and singing in the arms of those who love and care for them.

The discussion helped to define long- and short-term goals and approaches that will inform strategy for Reach Out and Read, and hopefully for other Forum participants going forwards.

Long-Term Goals

Transformation of a system that was designed to deliver pediatric care for acute medical conditions into one incorporating preventive care that effectively addresses long-term health and wellness will require:

- Enactment of policies that drive change in attitude, practice and funding
- Feasible and impactful best practice incorporated into Bright Futures and the Periodicity Schedule to secure wide scale adoption and funding through public/private healthcare systems
- Effective skill building that equips physicians to support strong caregiver-child relationships



David Willis MD, Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Social Policy

Approach:

Strategies to achieve our goals will only be successful if the following approaches are integral to the work:

- **Co-Design with Practitioners and Families**

Innovative solutions and practices to achieve our goals must be designed together with both those who will be implementing and those who are being served.

- **Equipping Clinicians for the Support of Strong Caregiver-Child Relationships**

A shift in emphasis towards preventive medical care that supports strong caregiver-child relationships requires attention to skills not traditionally included in pediatric care training, including partnering with families, eliciting family goals and needs, empathic dialogue, eliciting parent perspectives, supporting parent self-reflection, and developing attuned conversational skills in situations of conflict.

- **Developing Innovation Through an Equity Lens**

Recognize that any new system of practice should include the capacity to address the supports needed for those families who face pressures of food or housing insecurity; those experiencing ongoing personal stress and isolation; those who have not had the benefit of a supportive high school education; and those who did not experience a positive, nurturing environment growing up.



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Short-Term Goals

The following goals were identified for us all, collectively:

- **Spread Awareness**

Communicate the importance of positive parent-child interactions (also referred to as early relational health) within the pediatric primary care workforce, within early childhood development systems and to the community at large.

- **Policy and Advocacy**

Develop and launch a plan to design, test, implement and advocate for policies that promote positive parent/caregiver-child interactions, social and emotional development, and early learning and literacy.

- **Training and Skill Building**

Develop and implement training and skill building that promote early relational health for the pediatric primary care community, including physicians, residents and established clinic staff.

- **Well-Child Visits and Team-Based Care**

Optimize the opportunity for the foundational promotion of early relational health within the well-child visit and explore development of team-based care to provide individualized tiered support to children and those that care for them.

- **Early Relational Health Assessment Tool**

Identify and validate tools that effectively assess early relational health to both enable the provision of the correct supports for each family and evaluate the impact of innovative initiatives.

- **Community**

Explore and pilot mechanisms to link the medical home and the community to support-aligned and mutually reinforcing messaging.

“The Forum built on the science we know that makes Reach Out and Read a powerful intervention, and takes it to the next level by talking about the relationships between families and their physician, families and their children, and how all those relationships can build upon each other to form a strong foundation for children throughout their whole lives.”

– **Mark Del Monte, JD CEO and Executive Vice President American Academy of Pediatrics**

Reach Out and Read's Strategy

With an awareness of ongoing work towards these goals by other Forum participants and within pediatric primary care in general, Reach Out and Read will focus specifically on a strategy that is supported by:

- Our simple, evidence-based model of promoting positive, language-rich parent/caregiver-child interactions through early literacy, which has been successfully integrated into millions of pediatric well-child visits across the country.
- Our deep connections and broad reach to tens of thousands of pediatricians, family physicians and nurse practitioners within pediatric primary care.
- Our infrastructure of local connection with thousands of medical clinics that supports scalability with fidelity.

We will:

- Communicate the importance of early relational health and build momentum for change within the pediatric primary care workforce.
- Develop, pilot and scale training for both established clinicians and residents that is demonstrated to equip pediatric primary care communities with skills that effectively promote early relational health.
- Establish a policy advisory group to craft a Reach Out and Read policy agenda to advance strategies delivered in the pediatric primary care setting that promote early brain development, early literacy and school readiness.
- Continue to optimize the integration of promotion of early relational health through early literacy into pediatric well-child visits.



Dipesh Navsaria MD, Reach Out and Read Board Member, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and **Alan Mendelsohn MD**, ROR Medical Advisory Committee Member, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, New York University Langone Health

Reach Out and Read would like to thank all of the Next Chapter Forum participants for their energy and enthusiasm and their thoughtfulness and generosity in sharing ideas that made the day such a success. We hope that the day afforded you the opportunity to reflect, connect and partner to further our collective dreams, and we look forward to partnering with many of you as we put our strategy into action and as we join with you in yours.