

History of the College



The AAP began a bit more than 75 years ago because a group of pediatrician American Medical Association (AMA) members began to notice that the AMA was increasingly motivated by self-rather than patient-interest. The seminal event was AMA opposition to federal legislation designed to improve the health and well-being of children. With that, a group of pediatricians met in Detroit to form an organization whose sole focus was to be children.

By the end of the last century, pediatricians, including members of the AAP, began to notice a disturbing shift in that focus. Increasingly, the Academy promoted social policy based on political correctness and the wants of adults rather than the needs of children. The AAP first accepted and later supported the abortion of children who should have been their patients. They encouraged adolescents to bypass the advice and counsel of their parents' on important medical matters. They discouraged discussion with children about the need to avoid sexual activity until marriage. They held close ties to the pharmaceutical industry, and were reluctant to accept the reality of a two party government system in this country. All of these items/issues provoked concern among many of the Nation's pediatricians.

In the year 2001, the AAP moved in yet another direction. Supported by a small group of members, they decided to examine the issue of the rearing of children by homosexual adults. A statement was prepared supporting this concept and circulated to committees of the AAP for review. Most were silent, but the Section on Bioethics Executive Committee recommend against the publication of the statement because of several inherent flaws. Unfortunately, a vocal minority was pressing for publication and so the Board engaged an academic Gay-Rights activist to draft a "Technical Report" designed to defend the statement with "scientific" evidence. In February 2002, the Statement, titled "Co-parent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents," was published in Pediatrics along with a Technical Report-each of which generated an outcry of opposition from AAP members.

Among those members was Gerry Boccarossa, DO, who was so incensed that he sought legal advice on the development of a new organization, commissioning a law firm to investigate, then copyright the name American College of Pediatricians, and begin the process of drafting organizational bylaws. He also began to discuss the development of this organization with colleagues and friends, and resolved to terminate his AAP membership.

In mid 2002, AAP News published a commentary by Joseph Zanga, MD decrying the AAP's support for homosexual parenting because the evidence of its appropriateness was weak to nonexistent and the Technical Report cited heavily flawed and/or biased studies. Despite this and member outcry, the Academy refused to retract or even modify its position and said so in further commentary.

The publication by Dr. Zanga in AAP News had however served an important purpose. Dr. Zanga had been president of the AAP and his name was known to Dr. Boccarossa who then called him and presented him with the idea of a new organization. Communication continued through the summer, reviewing what Dr. Boccarossa had already accomplished, and planning the next steps. The first action taken was the attendance, by a small group of pediatricians who vocally opposed the AAP's support of homosexual parenting, at the AAP Annual Chapter Forum held in September 2002, just outside Chicago. At this Forum, attended by the presidents and vice presidents of all AAP Chapters and the national leadership, 17 resolutions opposing the Academy's promotion of homosexual parenting were on the agenda. Despite reasoned arguments in support of these resolutions, they were defeated. The defeat of one resolution was particularly disturbing since it simply said that "The

Academy would suspend any support for homosexual or same sex (co-parent) adoption until longitudinal, well designed, case controlled studies of statistically adequate sample size exist which can confirm that such arrangements are truly in the best interests of the children involved.” The defeat was disturbing because it hinged on the oft repeated statement that there was no, and would not soon be, good scientific data to support the chosen policy.

Meeting at Dr. Zanga’s home near the site of the Chapter Forum, six pediatricians resolved to hold a meeting in Boston with Dr. Boccarossa, the purpose of which would be to found a new organization to be titled the American College of Pediatricians.

On October 19th, in a conference room not far from the Annual AAP meeting headquarters hotel, 15 AAP members met, with Dr. Zanga facilitating, to establish the College. Included in our discussion were a review of the third draft of the bylaws, the mission, vision, values statements, membership categories, officers, and directors. The meeting lasted until early evening and, among other items, ended with an agreement that Dr. Zanga would serve as interim president and Dr. Boccarossa would serve as interim secretary-treasurer.

Following the Boston meeting, correspondence continued primarily involving Drs. Zanga and Boccarossa with occasional involvement from others who were present at the inaugural meeting. A lengthy conference call occurred on December 9th to further consider bylaws, membership recruitment, funding, election of officers, tax exemption status, and membership applications, finances, and administrative support. A major focus of the call was the development of an agenda for a second face-to-face meeting.

This first meeting of what was to become the Board of Directors of the American College of Pediatricians was held Friday and Saturday, January 10-11, 2003 in an Atlanta hotel conference room. In attendance were Drs. Reed Bell, Tom Benton, Gerry Boccarossa, Eugene Diamond, Elaine Festa, Patricia Lee June, Phillip Kaleida, Donald Lewis, William Payne, S. DuBose Ravenel, Howard Rogers, Den Trumbull, Leah Willson, and Joseph Zanga. Officers were elected with Dr. Zanga elected President, Dr. Benton Vice President, and Dr. Boccarossa Secretary-Treasurer. A Board of Directors was elected with staggered terms. That Board included Drs. Reed Bell, James Cartwright, Federico deMiranda, Eugene Diamond, Patricia Lee June, Phillip Kaleida, Donald Lewis, William Payne, S. DuBose Ravenel, Howard Rogers, Den Trumbull, and Leah Willson. Bylaws were established, a Mission, Vision, Values statement and a set of core values were also set down, and a tax exemption statement was approved for submission to the IRS.

The American College of Pediatricians was officially established and its work on behalf of children and their families was set in motion.