**AAP Chapter Media Pitch – Talking points for spokespersons**

*April 2020*

*Note: Sharing your personal experiences and what you have seen among your own patients will make your interview more engaging. For example, if you had to plead with a new mom to bring a baby in for a well visit, during which you diagnosed a treatable problem; you were able to effectively counsel a family during a telehealth visit; you met a family in the parking lot to do a throat culture.*

Q: A question many parents have been asking is whether it’s safe to bring their child in to the pediatrician for their scheduled well-child visit, and for immunizations – or if it’s better to wait until after the pandemic. What do you advise?

* **It is still important to get scheduled vaccines to protect children and prevent diseases like measles and pertussis, which can be dangerous for children and easily spread in communities**. We are worried about what disease outbreaks we could have later this summer/fall, if many children are behind on their vaccines.

Q: From a business perspective, with patient volumes so low, are you worried about the viability of smaller pediatric practices? What sorts of tough decisions have you had to make for your own practice?

* A: For many practices in [state], patient volumes are at 20-30 percent of previous levels.
* In my own practice, [share examples of impact, such as we have furloughed staff.] I know many pediatricians with small practices are really struggling, and we worry some of them may not still be in business two months from now. **That would leave many children without access to health care**, or they will have to drive a lot farther for care. I’m really worried this will become a serious challenge for many families, especially in rural areas where there may not be another pediatrician nearby.
* We have been anxiously awaiting critical financial help that we’ve been assured is coming from the federal government.

Q: What illnesses or injuries are you worried you are NOT seeing now, with so many fewer patients coming into your office? Are children with serious medical problems just not being diagnosed?

* Share specific examples from your practice, such as patients delaying care for urgent or chronic health issues.
* If pediatricians across the country are seeing 30% of patients … that is a lot of vaccines that are delayed, which could have serious repercussions. Many parents are just not calling because they think we are busy – but we are not too busy to take care of children. **We are still here to take care of children, and we know we cannot just put children’s health on pause for two months.**

Q: What should parents do if their child is sick or injured, or is having a hard time emotionally right now?

* First thing, **call your pediatrician.** There are some things we can help with over the phone, or in a video visit. <give examples> Or, if your pediatrician really needs to see you in person, they will tell you how that can happen safely. What we DON’T want, is for parents to feel like they have to handle this alone. They are not alone. **We are here to help you make sure your child is as healthy as possible, which is really important right now**.

Q: What kinds of health care visits can happen by video or telephone, and which ones need to be in person?

* Spokesperson to answer

Q: How are pediatricians making in-person visits as safe as possible right now?

* Spokesperson to answer, using specific examples from their practice or other practices in state

Q: With all of these stay at home orders in place for the foreseeable future, what about children whose homes aren’t safe?

* This is a real concern. People are under tremendous stress right now, both emotional and financial. And research has shown that when families are stressed, children are at an increased risk of being abused. We want to remind parents and caregivers to be sure to take care of themselves – get enough sleep, eat healthy, get some exercise – and reach out to support networks for help. That can include your pediatrician. With a phone call or video visit, your pediatrician can help you with strategies to manage your children’s behavior, cope with a crying baby, or handle some of the other parenting challenges people are facing right now. **As a pediatrician, I want every family in my practice to know I am here to help them through this.**

Q. What advice do you have for parents of teenagers, who are missing out on a lot of the social interactions that are so important to them?

* Social distancing can be especially hard for teens, who may feel cut off from their friends. And some teenagers are facing big letdowns as important milestone events like graduations and proms are being cancelled. I would tell parents to try to create a healthy daily routine, including time of online learning, exercise, sleep, family meals, and downtime. Encourage them to connect with friends online or by phone. If you are sensing your teen is sad or depressed, they may need more support, and I’d recommend reaching out to your pediatrician to see if their emotional health can be screened in an e-visit. This is not something to let go and hope it gets better. Even before the pandemic, we were worried about increased rates of suicide among adolescents, and we know that now teens are facing additional stresses. **It's important to know that your teen CAN feel better, and your pediatrician can help.**