

PEDS R US

Indian Americans Have Fewer Sudden Infant Deaths, Rutgers Study Finds

By [Patti Verbanas](#)—Rutgers Today



Thomas Hegyi, MD and Barbara Ostfeld, PhD

Indian Americans have the highest percentage of sleeping with their babies among ethnic groups in New Jersey but the lowest rate of sudden unexpected infant death (SUID), a Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences study shows.

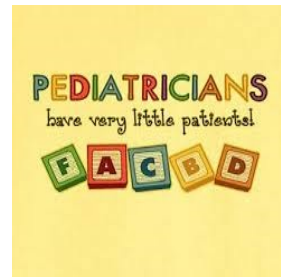
Researchers attributed this paradoxical finding to a variety of compensatory factors, including Indian Americans' practice of placing their infants on their backs to sleep.

The study appears in the journal *New Jersey Pediatrics*.



Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

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“Conditions that substantially increase the risk of SUID while bed-sharing include smoking, alcohol use and maternal fatigue,” said lead author Barbara Ostfeld, a professor of pediatrics at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “Indian Americans smoke and use alcohol less than other populations. In addition, grandparents tend to be very active in childcare, which reduces maternal fatigue. Apart from bed-sharing, poverty also increases the risk of SUID, and Indian Americans have higher incomes.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics considers bed sharing to be a high risk factor in SUID, which includes sudden infant death syndrome, accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed, and ill-defined and unknown causes in children under one year old.

“There is strong clinical information on the risks associated with bed sharing,” Ostfeld said. “Our intent was to discover more about this little-researched demographic breakdown, so we can better understand the risk factors for SUID in all groups and create culturally sensitive health messaging.”

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Indian Americans Have Fewer Sudden Infant Deaths, Rutgers Study Finds

The researchers looked at the mortality rates of 83,000 New Jersey–born infants of Asian-Indian heritage over a 15-year period and safe sleep practices in a sampling of this population. Results showed that 97 percent of the surveyed American-born mothers of Asian-Indian heritage reported using a crib, compared to 69 percent of those who were foreign-born.

Although infants of the foreign-born mothers now residing in the United States had a higher SUID rate compared to infants of U.S.-born mothers of Asian-Indian heritage, for whom no SUID was

recorded, the rate was still lower than that of other populations: From 2000 to 2015, infants of foreign-born mothers of Asian-Indian heritage had a SUID rate of 0.14 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 0.4 in white, 0.5 in Hispanic and 1.6 in black populations.

“Our study shows that improved compliance with American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines on supine sleep and avoiding bed sharing is associated with a lower rate of SUID even in already low-risk groups,” said Ostfeld. “Larger studies are needed to better understand the complex variables that affect risk in sharing a bed with an infant.”

Department of Pediatrics

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Pediatric Hematology/Oncology



*Peter Cole, MD
Division Director*

The Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology has lots of exciting news to report for the new academic year!

After 11 years, Peter Cole, MD has returned to New Brunswick, as the Chief of the Division, Professor of Pediatrics, and Embrace Kids Foundation Chair of Pediatric Hematology Oncology. He has already recruited two new faculty: Scott Moerdler, MD, who completed his fellowship in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore in the Bronx and studied novel approaches to cancer immunotherapy at Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and Advaita Madireddy, PhD, an NIH-funded scientist who will be part of the Genomic Instability and Cancer

Genetics Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Additional recruitment of scientists and clinicians is ongoing this Fall.

The Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology has long provided comprehensive, compassionate care for children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer or blood disorders. We are also at the cutting edge, constantly improving our therapeutic strategies through innovative clinical research. As members of the Children's Oncology Group, we offer our patients with cancer participation in multi-institutional clinical trials. Through partnerships with other consortia and industry, we are offering participation in a broad array of clinical trials testing novel interventions for patients with benign blood disorders, such as sickle cell anemia and hemophilia.

Department of Pediatrics

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Pediatric Hematology/Oncology

Our division is thrilled to report new funding support for our clinical and laboratory research efforts. Dr. Cole brought with him an existing R01 to study the mechanisms of chemotherapy-induced neurotoxicity in an animal model. In September he learned that the NIH is awarding a second R01 (\$3.4 Million total over five years) to study biomarkers related to treatment-related neurotoxicity among children being treated for acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Richard Drachtman has also received renewed support for his clinical research for children with cancer from the Children's Oncology Group, as well as for children with Sickle Cell Disease. In addition our Division has received two very generous donations from the Hugs for Brady Foundation (\$500 thousand) and the Embrace Kids Foundation (\$1 million over five years), which will be used to support existing research infrastructure and develop new research endeavors.

These and other ongoing efforts are leading to regional and international recognition for members of our Division. Drs. Drachtman and Cole, for example, published this summer the results of an international, multi-institutional clinical trial showing the efficacy and safety of an innovative combination therapy approach for children and young adults with refractory Hodgkin Lymphoma (*Lancet Oncology*, 2018; 19(9):1229-38). Both Drs. Drachtman and Cole will be attending an International Hodgkin Lymphoma Conference in Cologne Germany, where they will be presenting results of clinical research. In recognition of his expertise in therapeutics for Hodgkin Lymphoma, Dr. Cole was invited to an advisory meeting for the European Medicines Agency in London this September, to discuss an approval strategy for using novel immunotherapeutics in combination therapy. Dr. Drachtman was recently named chair of the National Cancer Institute's Pediatric Central Institutional Review Board, in recognition of his extensive experience evaluating clinical trials. And Jocelyn Lewis, DO, will give an invited presentation, "Incorporation of Population Sciences into an Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Program", at the 3rd Global AYA Cancer Congress in Sydney Australia in December.

We look forward to continuing our existing interactions with our colleagues in the Department of Pediatrics, as well as to exploring and developing new clinical, research, and teaching collaborations.

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Pediatric Endocrinology



*Ian Marshall, MD
Division Director*

The Division of Pediatric Endocrinology currently consists of 3 physicians and a full time advanced practice nurse, providing clinical services to patients ranging in age from birth to greater than 21 years for a variety of endocrine issues. These consist of disorders of growth, puberty, obesity, polycystic ovarian disease, thyroid, bone, vitamin D and calcium. Our physicians with our two pediatric certified diabetes educators also provide care to patients and families with types 1 and 2 diabetes, as well as other rare forms of diabetes. In addition, we manage patients with rare disorders including congenital adrenal hyperplasia, as well as Turner, Noonan and Prader Willi syndromes, as well as disorders of sexual development.

We now have the largest transgender program for hormonal affirmation treatment in NJ providing care to transgender children, youth and adults into their 30's.

Dr. Marshall serves on the medical advisory board for CARES Foundation, a national non profit organization that seeks to advance quality health care in patients and families with congenital adrenal hyperplasia community through support, advocacy, education and research. He has also recently been asked to serve on Governor Murphy's Transgender Equality Task Force for the state of NJ, and continues to serve as a member on the Pediatric Endocrine Society's Transgender Special Interest Group.

Dr. Balachandar serves as a consultant on NJ Newborn Screening Task Force for disorders of congenital hypothyroidism and congenital adrenal hyperplasia.

Dr. Gangat is the program director for the first Pediatric Endocrine fellowship program in the state of NJ with the first fellow starting in early October 2018.

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Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension



Attendings: Joann Carlson MD - Interim Division Chief

Valeriya Feygina MD

Secretary: Lyneta (Nina) Blair

Nurses: Cheryle Ludwig RN, Helen Mundy LPN

The Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension provides current, compassionate, comprehensive care to infants, children and teenagers (birth to 21 years) with kidney disease and elevated blood pressure. We follow patients from chronic kidney disease stage 1 to end staged disease. We have an active pediatric transplant program that reopened this summer and now has two pediatric surgeons. Additionally, Dr. Carlson serves as pediatric medical director at Davita Dialysis in New Brunswick where we care for our pediatric dialysis patients. Last year, we were excited to welcome Dr. Valeriya Feygina from Geisinger Community Medical Center. Dr. Feygina has a strong background in clinical medicine and education. She is currently serving as clerkship director for the

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Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension

medical student elective and medical director of pediatric transplantation. She will also help reinvigorate our peritoneal dialysis program through Davita. Additionally, our department is also beginning a collaboration with our weight management clinic to help patients with obesity and elevated blood pressure. We are excited to work with this clinic and help with blood pressure management in this high risk population.

In the past year, we have been working hard to find new ways to help serve our patients. In May 2018, we partnered with the medical students in the Pediatric to Adult Transition to Healthcare (PATH) organization to organize a transition program for our pediatric transplant patients (staff pictured on the next page). Over a pizza dinner, we discussed kidney disease, the transition process and answered questions from patients and family. The event was attended by adult nephrologists and many staff members from our transplant center. We look forward to planning another transition event this year.

We also have begun working with the Embrace Kids Foundation and the Kidney and Urology Foundation of America to find more ways to help our patients through research opportunities, community events and resources for those with financial needs. This past summer we were able to offer free laptops to our dialysis patients due to a generous gift from Embrace Kids and their donors. In the next year, we will continue to investigate more ways to support our patients and families with the help of these organization.

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Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension

Our department also continues to be involved in research. We have been involved in the Chronic Kidney Disease in Children (CKiD) study which is a multicenter, longitudinal study for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). Dr. Carlson is working on two clinical studies looking at quality of life in patients with CKD. We have published interesting case reports in the *Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism* and the NJ AAP publication.

We are also actively looking for new faculty who can help us build our research program.

Department of Pediatrics

NEW FACULTY



Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

August 2018

Michele Takyi, MD, Instructor, — General Pediatrics

Sirisha Yalamanchi, MD, Assistant Professor—Critical Care

Shoshana Zitter MD, Instructor, —General Pediatrics

September 2018

Monica Chugh, MD, Assistant Professor—Cardiology

October 2018

Kristin Capone, MD, Assistant Professor—Gastroenterology



Department of Pediatrics

RECOGNITION, CONGRATULATIONS



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Dr. Whitley-Williams Receives NMA Award***



Patricia Whitley-Williams, MD, professor of pediatrics, chief of the Department of Pediatrics' Division of Allergy, Immunology and Infectious Diseases and associate dean for inclusion and diversity, received the Scroll of Merit Award on Aug. 11, the National Medical Association's (NMA) highest honor.

Designated by the president and chair of the Board of Trustees at NMA, the award is presented to individuals or organizations whose efforts and contributions have been preeminent in medicine, health advocacy or service to the association. Dr. Whitley-Williams was chosen because of her promotion and advancement of medicine for people of African descent through education, advocacy and health policy to promote health and wellness, eliminate health disparities and sustain physician viability. The award was presented to Dr. Whitley-Williams at the 2018 Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly on Aug. 11 in Orlando.

***Taken from the Dean's Weekly View 9/7/18

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RECOGNITION, CONGRATULATIONS



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Dr. Chefitz Thanks Division of General Pediatrics at Event****



Since 2005, the Department of Pediatrics' Division of General Pediatrics had a contract at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset to care for children in the emergency department, newborn nursery and inpatient service. The dedicated faculty earned the trust and respect of the community and delivered top-notch care.

Recently, the contract ended, and Dalya Chefitz, MD, chief of the division and associate professor of pediatrics, invited the entire division to her home on Sunday to celebrate and honor the team, including **Dawn Thompson, MD**, site director and assistant professor of pediatrics; **Pankaj Doshi, MBBS**, RBHS instructor of pediatrics; **Kendra Hall, MD**, clinical instructor of pediatrics; and **Shunli Hou, MD**, RBHS instructor of pediatrics.

Dr. Hou and Dr. Thompson are continuing their commitment to the department by seeing patients and teaching as part of the pediatric faculty practice at 1 World's Fair Drive in Somerset.

***Taken from the Dean's Weekly View 7/13/18

Department of Pediatrics

RECOGNITION, CONGRATULATIONS



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Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics Compete in Softball Game



The Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics participated in their second annual softball tournament on Aug. 19 in Highland Park.

The game was sponsored by Department of Medicine Chair Fredric Wondisford, MD, and Department of Pediatrics Chair Sally Radovick, MD.

The game ended in a tied score.

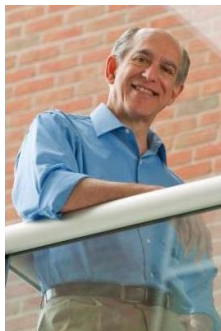
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Enhancing Scientific Rigor ***



Emanuel DiCicco-Bloom, MD, is one of several experts to be featured in a new training series by the Society for Neuroscience (SfN). SfN has partnered with the NIH and leading neuroscientists who are experts in the field of scientific rigor to offer the series, Promoting Awareness and Knowledge to Enhance Scientific Rigor in Neuroscience, as a part of NIH's Training Modules to Enhance Data Reproducibility (TMEDR).

Dr. DiCicco-Bloom appears in Research Practices to Enhance Scientific Rigor, in which he and other neuroscientists discuss best practices in experimental design, data analysis, and transparency in reporting and publishing methodology and data, and share how these efforts will strengthen the scientific foundation and ensure public confidence in the research being conducted.

***Taken from the Dean's Weekly View 8/3/18



Dr. Cato Varlack Appointed Assistant Dean***

Effective Aug. 1, Janice Cato Varlack, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics, has been named assistant dean for student and multicultural affairs.

Dr. Cato Varlack will foster an inclusive, culturally sensitive and diverse learning environment where students from all backgrounds can excel and achieve their personal goals. She will advise and counsel the student body, develop and implement student programs designed to enhance awareness of and sensitivity to

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RECOGNITION, CONGRATULATIONS



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race, gender, religion, ethnicity, culture, and other dimensions of diversity, and take responsibility for the medical school's enrichment programs for high school and college students.

Dr. Cato Varlack obtained her medical degree and completed her pediatric residency training at Weill Cornell Medical College. It was there that she began her professional and personal lifelong commitment for diversity and inclusion, working as a student-recruiter and serving as the secretary for the Student National Medical Association.

In 2005, Dr. Cato Varlack joined Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's Department of Pediatrics. As a faculty member, she served as the medical director at the pediatric clinic at University Medical Center of Princeton from 2005 to 2010, and was a resident preceptor at the medical school's Eric B. Chandler Health Center, as well as Neighborhood Health Center Plainfield, also a Federally Qualified Health Center. As a pediatrician in the outpatient and inpatient settings, Dr. Cato Varlack cares for medically complex patients from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

As an educator, she facilitates regular discussions with students and residents on topics of race, gender, religion, ethnicity and culture, while caring for patients and in the classroom as a patient-centered medicine facilitator. Pediatric residents awarded her the Lawrence T. Taft, MD Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching.

***Dean's Weekly August 17, 2018

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Dr. Michael Lewis Recognized for Lifetime Achievements***

The International Congress of Infant Studies presented **Michael Lewis, PhD**, University Distinguished Professor of pediatrics and psychiatry, and director of the Institute for the Study of Child Development, with a Founders Award for the field of infancy, and a Distinguished Contribution Award for his lifetime of study on infant development. The awards were presented at the organization's 21st Biennial Congress in June, at which Dr. Lewis participated in the group's 40th Anniversary Celebration Panel.



***Taken from the Dean's Weekly View 9/14/18

Department of Pediatrics

UPCOMING EVENTS



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UPCOMING EVENTS



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CENTER FOR CONTINUING AND OUTREACH EDUCATION



The Fifth Evidence-Based Pediatric Update Symposium
Saturday, November 3, 2018 | 7:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

<http://ccoe.rbhs.rutgers.edu/catalog/courses/19MR05.htm>

Department of Pediatrics

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Dear Colleagues,

I'm writing to you to clarify the provisions and application of the scheduled university closure on December 24, 2018:

Employees in Legacy Rutgers Positions

Employees in legacy Rutgers positions shall not report to work unless otherwise instructed and are not required to charge credited leave time to receive compensation for the day. Employees in legacy Rutgers positions designated as Essential Services personnel, as defined in Policy 60.1.29, may be required to report for work on December 24, 2018 and remain at work that day as set forth in Policy 60.3.19.

Employees in Legacy UMDNJ Positions

Employees in legacy UMDNJ positions are expected to report to work on December 24, 2018, for normal business operations. Employees in legacy UMDNJ positions who request to take December 24 off from work and are granted permission to do so, must charge accrued leave time in order to be compensated for the day. Employees in legacy UMDNJ positions who work in integrated units and who request to take December 24 off or who are directed to not report to work on that day, must charge accrued leave time in order to be compensated for the day.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please reach out to the Office of Labor Relations at (848) 932-3400.

Sincerely,

Vivian Fernández

Senior Vice President Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness