

[web version](#)

## Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information, contact:  
[info@aspho.org](mailto:info@aspho.org), 847.375.4716

### ASPHO Awards Recognize Scientists Galvanizing Patient Care

**Chicago, February 2026:** Notable investigators and clinicians whose groundbreaking work has spurred advancements in the pediatric hematology/oncology discipline will be honored at the [2026 ASPHO Conference](#), taking place April 29 - May 2 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"The Society's most prestigious awards celebrate exceptional achievements that propel patient care and enrich the profession," says Maria C. Velez, MD FAAP, Board President of the American Society for Pediatric Hematology/Oncology (ASPHO), and Medical Director, Hemostasis and Thrombosis Program, and Director of Neuro-Oncology Program, Manning Family Children's New Orleans, New Orleans, LA. Velez noted that "as the leading meeting for subspecialists and partners, the ASPHO Conference brings together renown practitioners and researchers, institutional and program leadership, and specialists representing the complexity and breadth of the field. Awards presented at the spring conference are recognized by the medical and scientific community as markers of advancement in the discipline."

**Peter E. Newburger, MD**, UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts, is the recipient of the Society's [2026 Distinguished Career Award](#). Colleagues who nominated Newburger for the Society's most prestigious award, noted Dr. Newburger "is exceedingly bright, dedicated, highly effective, and



unassuming. Funded by the National Institutes of Health and the US Department of Defense for 45 years—an extraordinary record—his scientific contributions in the field of neutrophil biology and rare neutrophil disorders have changed our approach to understanding and treating neutrophil disorders. His contributions of volunteerism and advocacy through professional service efforts have impacted patients internationally. As editor-in-chief of *Pediatric Blood & Cancer*, his leadership has raised the journal's level of scholarship and magnified a niche for pediatric hematology and oncology." *Dr. Newburger will be presented with the Distinguished Career Award on Friday May 1, with a reception following the presentation.*



The [2026 George R. Buchanan Lectureship Award](#) will be presented to **Kim E. Nichols, MD**, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. As noted by one of the nominators, Dr. Nichols is "a pioneering clinical scientist, mentor, and leader. Her work in cancer predisposition has redefined how we diagnose and care for children with hereditary risk for cancer. The Nichols Lab aims to better understand how germline genetic variants can lead to cancer and particular hyperinflammatory disorders. She invests deeply in the development of young physician scientists. A gifted educator, she has the ability to distill complex genomic science into clinically actionable insights." *Dr. Nichols will receive the George R. Buchanan Lectureship Award on Thursday, April 30.*



**Vijay G. Sankaran, MD PhD**, Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts is the recipient of the [2026 Frank A. Oski Memorial Lectureship Award](#), which is awarded to an outstanding clinical or laboratory investigator in pediatric hematology/oncology whose cutting-edge research is of the caliber of the investigations made by Dr. Oski. A colleague who nominated Dr. Sankaran shared, "Dr. Sankaran has the potential to be a world leader in pediatric hematology and oncology genetics. His initial PhD work convinced him that human genetic variation could illuminate both fundamental aspects of hematopoiesis and enable new therapies. This insight has guided everything his laboratory has pursued since. Frank's [Oski] spirit exists in Vijay. The work of the Sankaran lab has resulted

in a number of therapies for blood diseases, including work that led to the development of exagamglogene autotemcel (Casgevy) for sickle cell disease and beta-thalassemia." *Dr. Sankaran will give a lecture during the Frank A. Oski Memorial Lectureship Award presentation on Friday, May 1.*



ASPHO is proud to continue partnering with [Northwestern Mutual Foundation for the Childhood Cancer Survivorship Award for Excellence](#) and recognize 2026 honoree **Karen E. Effinger, MD MS**, from Emory University/Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia. The award recognizes professionals who focus on helping pediatric cancer survivors live full and healthy lives and whose work reflects a growing portfolio of research and project

funding. The \$10,000 honorarium augments the investigator's current work to enhance the lives of childhood cancer survivors through innovative projects. Dr. Effinger's colleagues note, "Drawn to the field of cancer survivorship, [Dr. Effinger] has dedicated her career to helping patients not only survive but thrive in the years following treatment. Her application of technology-based solutions to address a major challenge in survivorship clinical care—extracting treatment data to generate the survivorship care plan and enabling survivors to share these plans with their providers—is transformative. She is an enthusiastic researcher who is mentoring and educating the next generation of pediatric oncologists interested in survivorship." *Dr. Effinger will be presented with the Childhood Cancer Survivorship Award for Excellence on Friday, May 1.*

The [2026 ASPHO Conference](#) will also feature a special session on the latest legislation and advocacy impacting PHO, the 2026 Presidential Symposium "*Addressing Financial Distress in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology: Implications for Cancer, Sickle Cell Disease, and Survivorship*" with President Maria C. Velez, MD FAAP, Luminary Speakers Julie Park, MD (Oncology) and Tom Coates, MD (Hematology), small-group learning with experts at Clinical Conundrum sessions featuring Refractory ITP, Blinatumomab, Iron Overload, and Brain Tumors-ATRT.

The premier conference supporting the unique needs of pediatric hematologists and oncologists, the [ASPHO Conference](#) brings critical basic, translational, and clinical research and recommendations, education, mentoring, and networking opportunities to investigators and practitioners from every sector of the field including hospitalists, physician assistants, advanced nurse practitioners, other advanced practice providers, and allied healthcare professionals. Registration is open for the [2026 ASPHO Conference](#).

Nominations and applications for [ASPHO Awards](#) that will be presented at the 2027 ASPHO Conference, taking place Tuesday, May 11 through Friday, May 14 in Montreal, Québec, CA are being accepted through **September 30, 2026**.

The [American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology \(ASPHO\)](#) is the professional medical society of pediatric hematology/oncology subspecialists and other healthcare professionals dedicated to promoting the optimal care of children, adolescents, and young adults with blood disorders and cancer. Founded in 1981, ASPHO serves 2,000 members including physicians, researchers, fellows in training, and advanced practice providers by sponsoring educational and professional development programs, promoting discovery, advocating on behalf of its patient base and members, advancing professional practice and supporting partnerships to further its goals. Learn more: [2026 ASPHO Conference](#), [About Us](#), [Educational Offerings](#), and [Community](#).

*ASPHO is closely monitoring recent events in Minneapolis, staying in contact with local authorities and the Minneapolis Convention and Visitors Bureau. Our highest priority is the safety of our conference attendees, partners, and staff. Visit [aspho.org/conf2026](https://aspho.org/conf2026) for updates.*

###

ASPHO®

© The American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology®

1061 American Lane, Suite 310, Schaumburg, IL 60173-4973

Phone: 847.375.4716 | Fax: 847.375.6483

[info@aspho.org](mailto:info@aspho.org) | [www.aspho.org](http://www.aspho.org)



This email was sent to [online\\_version@informz.net](mailto:online_version@informz.net) by [info@aspho.org](mailto:info@aspho.org)  
[Update email preferences or unsubscribe](#)

