



# Keeping Up to Date Is More Than *UpToDate*

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Congratulations, you are currently on the cutting edge of medical science! Really, right after completing residency or fellowship, and studying for boards, you will have the most current journal articles at the front of your brain and the more esoteric diagnoses at your fingertips too. The problem, of course, is that what was standard of care or even cutting edge when you started can quickly become obsolete. This is where all those lifelong learning skills you have developed are put to work. It can seem daunting. However, you are well prepared to do this from your lifetime of study, and it is natural to do so because of the exciting, ever-evolving ways to help and take care of your patients. Continuing education is about figuring out how to integrate learning with your daily practice and life.

Just like board studying, there is no “one size fits all” way to stay current. There are really two aspects of keeping up to date on the medical literature: learning what you need to know to keep taking good care of your patients and logging appropriate CME credit to meet your state or other professional requirements for recertification. There are numerous ways to fulfill both of these goals at same the time, making them feel less burdensome.

In determining how to remain current in pediatrics, key questions to keep in mind are: (1) what is your learning style, (2) what

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integrates best into your life, and (3) how can you get credit for what you are already doing?

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## **What Is Your Learning Style?**

If you do best reading articles, then use a journal that lets you get CME credit for answering questions on the articles you read. If you are referencing an article in guiding your clinical care, check and see if there are CME questions you can complete with it. Making reading as convenient as possible is key. Download articles to your phone so you can read when you have a free minute between things, or print an old-fashioned paper copy if electronic reading does not work well for you. Set a goal to read once a week, so even if you miss a week here and there, you will have read more than 30 new articles in a year about areas that interest you and impact your clinical practice. Other resources which you may already reference in the midst of patient care have streamlined the ability to claim CME credit for the lifelong learning you are doing in consulting additional resources to fill knowledge gaps and enhance your clinical care (*UpToDate* is one example).

If you learn best from questions, there are numerous question banks for pediatric study and board review. Look for options with “learning mode” where you get immediate feedback and detailed explanations of correct and incorrect answers, so it is helping you gain and retain knowledge. AAP PREP is an example of this, which is also eligible for CME credit. Use your phone to do a few when you get into the office in the morning, while waiting for a staff meeting to start, or during other downtime. Just like any habit, having it consistently incorporated into your day makes it easier to keep up.

If you are an auditory learner, there are a wealth of pediatric podcasts to which you can listen. You can integrate these into your commute, workout, while doing the dishes, or wherever it fits into your life. It is an ideal way to stay current. Grand rounds from children’s hospitals around the country are often broadcast live or archived, and there are a variety of webinars on pediatric topics, so you may be able to tune in during lunch. Most of these are free and often CME eligible.

The best thing to use to keep current is whatever you are going to actually use. Therefore, focus on a format that is engaging for you and the ability to make it fit into your routine. It does not help you if it is an amazing resource but you never get to it or if it just feels like one more thing on your to-do list. Picking areas that are relevant to your clinic practice, and thus making your daily practice easier, is ideal because it will be self-reinforcing.

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## What Integrates Best into Your Life?

All of the above resources are pretty time flexible and work well if you are trying to learn in short bursts of time throughout the week or month. They can also be used for more intensive periods to do a block or binge of continuing education if your work or family schedule makes that more realistic. However, retention can be lower if you are trying to absorb a large amount of new information in a short time.

The other aspect to consider, in addition to thinking about what fits into your daily life, is how you can remain current on the medical literature while meeting your other personal and professional needs. Attending national or local medical meetings and conferences can keep your knowledge sharp and facilitate connecting with friends and colleagues. Residency classmates who may have scattered across the globe after completing training may be up for meeting at a national CME meeting.



Additionally, conferences can be an opportunity to meet and network with new people. You can also get involved with a local chapter of a national organization to volunteer your skills and advance your professional resume through leadership positions. You can volunteer on a committee, or as a poster judge, or in another area of interest or passion. It also can be fun to use medical conferences as family trips; they tend to be held at family-friendly locations, and you can take some additional time to explore as a family. Babies can be easier to bring along to meetings than you would think, particularly with a conference full of pediatricians. It is hard to find a group of people more in love with and understanding of babies. All three of my kiddos as babies have joined mommy as a meeting attendee, one at only 3.5 weeks old. It works pretty well to snuggle in a carrier until they get more mobile.



If you are not interested in travel, seek out local opportunities through professional organizations or local children's hospitals to learn and foster personal and professional connections, which can

be a source of joy. Local residency programs may run a journal club as part of their residency teaching and are often eager to have additional attendees join, which can be an opportunity for bidirectional learning and fostering connections. Local American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) chapters or subspecialty groups run events as well.

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## **Informal Learning**

Learning does not have to be formal. It can be more organic to your daily practice. There are many non-CME bearing ways to keep your practice up to date. If you are referring your patients to specialists, pay attention to which subspecialists' consult notes are helpful in terms of providing current practice recommendations. This can help you learn from their practice and reinforce and make changes in your practice. Talk with your colleagues about interesting or difficult cases. Do not underestimate your knowledge because you are a new attending. You may know recent developments, while others may have different knowledge garnered from years of clinical practice. Use each other's experiences. If you work more independently or do not have a practice setup that allows this to happen fluidly, then try to identify some mentors or colleagues from medical school/residency/fellowship who you can text or call to curbside consult or simply use as a sounding board for challenging cases.

Overall, staying current does not need to be a chore. It is about finding an enjoyable rhythm of integrating learning into your regular practice, playing to your learning style, and meeting your personal and professional goals.