

Dr. Zacharias, 2026 Society for Pediatric Research Awardee



Patrick Zacharias, MD, FAAP was honored with the 2026 Society for Pediatric Research (SPR) Regional Research Award at the recent Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) Meeting in Boston for his breakthrough clinical study on the cardiovascular health of newborns. Representing the Western SPR region as a second-year neonatology fellow at Los Angeles General Medical Center / USC, his work was highlighted as a major advancement in early identification and risk management for at-risk infants.

Dr. Zacharias has a focused interest in neonatal cardiovascular physiology and the impact of maternal conditions on fetal and neonatal outcomes. His work aims to improve early identification and management of at-risk neonates through advanced imaging and evidence-based clinical approaches. Dr. Zacharias was recognized for his research examining echocardiographic differences in ventricular structure and function among infants of diabetic mothers, with a specific focus on preterm populations.

Key Discoveries of His Research

- **Structural Changes:** He discovered that moderate-to-late preterm infants exposed to maternal diabetes show a significant increase in left ventricular mass and heart wall thickness compared to full-term infants, even though their overall systolic function looked normal.
- **The HbA1c Link:** His findings proved a direct association between these structural heart abnormalities and higher maternal HbA1c levels, particularly in mothers managing type 2 diabetes.
- **Clinical Impact:** The study highlighted that prematurity worsens the negative cardiovascular effects of maternal diabetes, proving that these vulnerable newborns need early cardiac screenings and evaluations.

Established in 2017 by the SPR Council, the **SPR Regional Research Awards** recognize talented child health researchers from the SPR Regional Societies.