Dear Ms. Phinney,

As a pediatrician and researcher in the area of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related infant deaths (such as suffocation, strangulation, and entrapment), I am writing to provide additional information with regards to the safety of bumper pads.

1) Bumper pads were initially developed as a way to prevent head entrapment between crib slats. However, newer crib standards requiring crib slat spacing to be <2-3/8” have obviated the need for crib bumpers.

2) I believe that Dr. Sharfstein is aware of Dr. Bradley Thach's report using CPSC data on deaths and injuries associated with bumper pads. He concluded that the use of bumper pads only prevents minor injuries. It should be noted that the CPSC has disagreed with Dr. Thach's conclusions and has stated that there were other confounding factors, such as the presence of pillows and/or blankets, that may have contributed to many of the deaths in this report. However, an investigative report by Ms. Ellen Gabler of the Chicago Tribune refutes the CPSC's claims.

3) Furthermore, a more recent study of crib injuries, using data from the CPSC's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, concluded that the potential benefits of preventing minor injury with bumper pad use are far outweighed by the risk of serious injury, such as suffocation or strangulation.

4) One of the primary reasons that parents use bumper pads is because they are concerned about limb entrapment that can occur between crib slats or head injury if the infant rolls into the crib railings. Young infants (i.e., those younger than 6 months of age - who are the ones at highest risk for SIDS and other sleep-related deaths) generally do not have the strength and coordination to hit the railings with such force that it will result in injury. Limb entrapment can occur but generally does not result in injury; however it does result in parental anxiety.

5) Regulations that would require even more close spacing of crib slats would eliminate the danger of limb entrapment and likely do a great deal towards alleviating parental anxiety about this possibility. This would make elimination of bumper pads from the environment more acceptable to parents.

6) Of note, there are new products (such as “Breathable Bumper”, “Oliver B”, and “Go Mama Go”) that attach to crib sides or crib slats that claim to protect infants from injury while eliminating the potential for SIDS or suffocation. However, there are no published data that support these claims.

Because of the potential for suffocation, entrapment, and strangulation, and lack of evidence to support that bumper pads or similar products that attach to crib slats or sides prevent injury in young infants, the AAP does not recommend their use.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns that I can address.

Sincerely,
Rachel Y. Moon, M.D.


Rachel Y. Moon, MD
Director, Academic Development
Associate Chief, Division of General Pediatrics and Community Health
Goldberg Center for Community Pediatric Health
Children's National Medical Center
Professor of Pediatrics
George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences
Tel 202-476-3948
Fax 202-476-3386

Co-author of "14 Ways to Protect Your Baby from SIDS" (www.parentingpress.com/sids.html)