

# This Reading Program Can Benefit Young Patients, Their Families, and Your Practice

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## Research shows Reach Out and Read promotes relational health and child development.

From the moment parents or caregivers bring a child home, there are opportunities for the child's physician to promote early relational health, help families build an environment that promotes healthy development, and create readers for life. One ready-to-deploy program to help our youngest patients get off to a good start is Reach Out and Read (ROR).

ROR is a nonprofit program that promotes early childhood literacy and strong family connections by training clinicians to educate parents and caregivers on shared reading techniques and recommending age-appropriate books for practices to distribute to patients.

Practices interested in joining ROR can check if there is a state or regional affiliate already in their area (<https://reachoutandread.org/about/affiliate-leadership/>) or email the national center at [startup@reachoutandread.org](mailto:startup@reachoutandread.org).

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Participating clinicians receive training eligible for CME, and the only cost to the practice is the books. They are available at discounted prices that average \$3.50 (prices vary based on title, language, and vendor). ROR affiliates may be able to connect you with organizations that can provide funding.

Integrating ROR into well-child visits is not onerous. You can use a book to engage with the child and build rapport initially, then use it to help assess the child's development (can the child turn pages, point to objects, identify colors, etc.). In minutes you get useful data while modeling reading techniques for the caregivers who are present.

## ROR BENEFITS PATIENTS AND MEDICAL PRACTICES

Since its inception in 1989, ROR has built a wealth of evidence that supports its benefits. They include improved brain development, behavior, and academic achievement for children, and safe, stable, nurturing relationships in their families.<sup>1,2</sup>

A study of ROR at eight practice sites found that caregivers were more likely to read to their kids daily if they received at least four books from their child's physician.<sup>3</sup> Another study found that parents who receive guidance and encouragement from a trusted authority such as a physician read aloud to their kids more frequently, read a wider variety of books, and read with higher quality interactions, such as asking their child questions about the book and pointing to and labeling pictures.<sup>4</sup>

In another study, ROR com-

bined with access to a local library reduced maternal depression rates in young mothers,<sup>5</sup> who were also more likely to list reading as one of their child's favorite activities.

Multiple studies also show that ROR improves clinic morale and culture, and that clinicians value the program and find joy and meaning in it.<sup>6,7</sup> While not an antidote to physician burnout, ROR may provide a buffer against some of its effects.

The evidence for ROR is well established, and its benefits align with the goals of primary care and the heart of who we are. **FPM**

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