Children's Memorial appoints new surgeon-in-chief

Marleta Reynolds, MD

Marleta Reynolds, MD, has been appointed as surgeon-in-chief and head of the Surgery Department, following her service in this role on the interim basis since September 1, 2008. Children's Memorial has been fortunate to have her wide-ranging expertise since 1985. Reynolds also serves as the division head of Pediatric Surgery, director of the ECMO Program (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation or heart/lung bypass support), and a co-director of the Institute for Fetal Health. She holds the Lydia J. Frederickson Professorship in Pediatric Surgery and is a professor of surgery at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Reynolds is board certified in general surgery, pediatric surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, and surgical critical care.

New study probes genomics of preterm birth

Xiaobin Wang, MD, MPH, ScD, recently received a $3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct the first genome-wide association study of preterm birth in the multi-ethnic U.S. population, which could become a landmark study in the preterm field.

Wang's study is anticipated to lead to identification of novel genetic loci related to preterm birth. These findings may help develop a promising strategy to identify women at high risk for preterm delivery, and should have important implications for prevention of preterm birth and treatment of premature infants.

Wang is the Mary Ann & J. Milburn Smith Research Professor and director of the Smith Child Health Research Program at Children's Memorial Research Center. She is a professor of pediatrics at the Feinberg School.

Neonatal enterocolitis research

Isabelle De Plaen, MD, a neonatologist and researcher at Children's Memorial, was awarded a 2008 American Gastroenterological Association Foundation for Digestive Health and Nutrition Bridging Grant. Her long-term goals are to elucidate the molecular mechanisms that lead to neonatal enterocolitis (NEC), a deadly disease affecting the bowel of the premature infant, and to develop new therapeutic approaches.

De Plaen's laboratory has developed and characterized a neonatal mouse model of NEC. Using this model, she is studying the cell-specific role of the transcription factor nuclear factor-kB, a major regulator of inflammation, in bowel injury and NEC. She expects that the results will have an important impact on the understanding of NEC pathogenesis and promote specific cell-targeted therapies to change the outcome of this devastating disease. De Plaen is a member of the Center for Digestive Diseases and Immunobiology of Children's Memorial Research Center and an associate professor of pediatrics at the Feinberg School.

Can cardiac stem cells improve heart function in cardiomyopathy?

Sunjay Kaushal, MD

Children's Memorial's cardiovascular-thoracic surgeon and researcher Sunjay Kaushal, MD, is the recipient of a 2-year grant from the Children's Heart Foundation for his study "Cell-Based Therapy for Congenital Cardiomyopathy Using Endogenous Cardiac Stem Cells." He hopes to determine whether cardiac stem cells can improve cardiac function in a drug-induced cardiomyopathy model in mice that replicates the cardiomyopathy seen in congenital heart patients.

Kaushal's study will be an important first step in generating pre-clinical data to determine whether cardiac stem cells can reduce pediatric heart failure and improve the life expectancy in these clinically difficult cardiac patients. He is an assistant professor of surgery at the Feinberg School.

Researcher honored by Illinois Maternal & Child Health Coalition

Jenifer Cartland, PhD, director of Child Health Data Lab (CHDL) at Children's Memorial, was recently recognized with the Loretta Lacey Maternal and Child Health Advocacy Award from the Illinois Maternal & Child Health Coalition. CHDL provides focused analyses that help policy makers and public health planners identify local health needs and evaluate existing programs intended to promote health and prevent injury to children and adolescents. Cartland also is the co-director of the Center for Community Partnerships and Health Promotion, launched last year at Children's Memorial Research Center to bring together scholars and institutional collaborators to develop and promote evidence-based practices that address health risks in communities.

Pioneer Award from Children's Brain Tumor Foundation

Stewart Goldman, MD

Stewart Goldman, MD, medical director of Neuro-oncology at Children's Memorial, recently received the prestigious Pioneer Award from the Children's Brain Tumor Foundation for outstanding contributions in pediatric neuro-oncology and brain tumor research. Each year the organization honors an individual who has advanced the vision and pushed the boundaries in the field of neuro-oncology.

Goldman also is director of the hospital's Falk Brain Tumor Center, director of the Center for Clinical Trials Research for the Children's Memorial Research Center and associate professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. He also serves as principal investigator at Children's Memorial for the National Cancer Institute-sponsored Pediatric Brain Tumor Consortium where he is a member of the consortium's steering, scientific, new agents and angiogenesis committees. Goldman is also the site principal investigator for the Children's Oncology Group Phase I Consortium.

Groundbreaking food allergy study seeks more participants:
500 families still needed to help researchers unlock causes of food allergies and propel cures

A groundbreaking Children's Memorial Food Allergy Study is gathering momentum with the support of the National Institutes of Health. Launched in 2005 in response to the rapid rise in the incidence of childhood food allergies and the lack of effective prevention and treatment, it is unprecedented in size, scope, and complexity. The study is designed to find answers to some fundamental questions: What are the causes of food allergy? How can food allergy be predicted and prevented? Are there alternative or better treatments for food allergy?

To date, the research team has recruited over 500 food allergy affected families. The team is seeking to enroll an additional 500 families to reach its goal of 1,000. The large sample size is necessary in order to have sufficient statistical power to study over a million genetic markers and environmental exposures that potentially affect food allergy. Children suffering with food allergies need your help to make this a landmark study of food allergy.

Please visit **http://www.childrensmrc.org/allergy** for more information about this study. If you would like to promote the study in your office with posters and flyers, please call or email us (see contact).

Who is eligible: This is a family-based study. An eligible family includes both biological parents and at least 1 food allergy affected child (age 0-21 years). Both parents and affected children must be willing to participate.

What is involved: Participants undergo routine clinical measurements (height, weight, blood pressure), a lung function test, allergy skin test, blood draw (10 ml or 2 tsp for allergy test and genotyping) and a questionnaire interview. Visits are conducted in Chicago and suburban locations by trained research staff. The study team will make every effort to accommodate the study family's schedule and preferred location.

Contact: Please call a toll free number 888.573.1833 or email allergystudy@childrensmemorial.org.

Research team: The food allergy study team consists of multidisciplinary investigators and is led by Xiaobin Wang, MD, MPH, ScD, director of Mary Ann & J. Milburn Smith Child Health Research Program, and Jacqueline A. Pongracic, MD, head of the Division of Allergy and Immunology at Children's Memorial Medical Center.

Sponsors: The study is supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Chicago Community Trust, Food Allergy Initiative and generous donors.