The field of fetal therapy is expanding rapidly, with the number of surgeries and interventions rising and the perception of the fetus as a patient gaining momentum among physicians and other healthcare professionals. These developments, coupled with technological advances expected to further expand the scope of fetal therapy, underscore the need for specialized training – yet no formal subspecialty training aimed at fetal therapy exists.

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia has recently won a grant that will help bridge this gap by training a new generation of medical and surgical fetal specialists. The Hospital will use the grant aims to train clinician-scientists who are focused on fetal therapy and who can envision, develop, investigate and translate new and novel treatment strategies for the fetus.

The five-year Fetal Biology and Therapy Training Program, awarded by the National Institutes of Health to surgeon Alan Flake, M.D., and colleagues, provides basic laboratory research and/or patient-oriented research programs related to fetal treatment.

Laboratory research opportunities will include four major areas of basic research: stem-cell therapy in the fetus, fetal gene therapy, fetal wound healing, and fetal anatomic malformations and fetal lung growth.

Patient-oriented research opportunities, derived from the Hospital’s Center for Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment, will include involvement with two existing multicenter clinical trials on fetal treatment of myelomeningocele and twin-twin transfusion syndrome. Other patient-centered training opportunities revolve around designing and implementing new fetal therapy studies.

The grant includes 16 faculty members from Children’s Hospital and the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, as well as one mentor from Cornell University, and supports trainees for up to three years of clinical or laboratory research training at the post-doctoral fellowship level. The grant will support two trainees in the first year, three in the second year and four each year thereafter.

Dr. Flake serves as program director of the training grant, and Surgeon-in-Chief N. Scott Adzick, M.D., is program co-director. Other Children’s Hospital faculty members participating in the grant as mentors include: Toshio Asakura, M.D., Ph.D., and Kwaku Ohene-Frempong, M.D., Division of Hematology; Peter Gruber, M.D., Ph.D., and Holly Hedrick, M.D., Mark Johnson, M.D., and R. Doug Wilson, M.D., Department of Surgery; Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator Katherine High, M.D.; Robert Levy, M.D., and Jack Rychik, M.D., Division of Cardiology; and John Wolfe, V.M.D., Ph.D., Division of Neurology.

In February, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) had received enough petitions for H-1B visas to meet the congressionally mandated cap of 65,000 visas for federal fiscal year 2004, which runs from Oct. 1, 2003 through Sept. 30, 2004.

On April 1, the USCIS began processing H-1B petitions for an October 1, 2004, start date. Those seeking to work at Children’s Hospital on a new H-1B and those who wish to change their visa status to an H-1B should begin the petition process now to optimize their chances of getting visa approval before USCIS reaches its fiscal year 2005 cap.

USCIS is expected to reach its 65,000 cap early in fiscal year 2005. Investigators are therefore strongly encouraged to contact Jane Kim (ext. 4-2874 or kimja@email.chop.edu), the Hospital’s immigration specialist, if they intend to hire a foreign national requiring a new H-1B visa or will continue to employ an individual whose current visa needs to be converted to an H-1B.

H-1B petitions subject to the congressionally mandated cap may be filed no more than six months before an employee’s anticipated start date.
New Research Employees
(April 2004)
We welcome the following new research employees:

Animal Caretaker
Edward McGill

Coordinators
Kristin Coffan
Lorieann Wilkerson-Leconte

Psychology Associates
Jennifer Daley
Diane Primerano
Kristin Zielinski

Research Assistant
Michelle Berrong

Research Associate
William Grosse

Research Technicians
Julia Brown
Youngshin Lim
Hua-Fang Lin
Tarin Mason
Erin O’Toole
Christine Suppa

Bioinformatics Director Joins Children’s Hospital
Ge Zhang, Ph.D., recently joined Children’s Hospital as the new director of the Bioinformatics Core, which provides bioinformatics capabilities to better use experimental data, genomics, proteomics and other relevant information to enhance, enable and empower research, discovery and clinical application.

Before joining Children’s Hospital, Dr. Zhang worked on the Human Genome Project at a Department of Education national laboratory, led bioinformatics research and development in a biotechnology company, and most recently directed a discovery informatics effort at a pharmaceutical company.

Hospital Investigators Cure Severe Insulin Condition in Newborns
Children’s Hospital researchers successfully cured 91 percent of infants of a rare but serious congenital condition that can lead to diabetes and other health problems in children.

In the condition, called focal congenital hyperinsulinism (HI), excess levels of insulin cause low blood sugar, which may lead to irreversible brain damage. As an added risk, conventional surgery for the condition typically requires removing most of the pancreas and therefore often leads to diabetes.

A rare genetic disease, congenital HI has several subtypes, with the most severe forms affecting 100 to 200 infants each year in the United States. Of that number, approximately two-thirds may have the focal type of HI. The other form of congenital HI is called diffuse HI. At most centers where surgery is performed to treat HI, near-total pancreatectomies are the standard procedure because physicians have difficulty differentiating between diffuse and focal HI. The near-total pancreatectomy approach to treating HI leaves children at risk for developing diabetes.

However, using an approach that combined medical tests, operative biopsies and surgery, the research team, led by Surgeon-in-Chief N. Scott Adzick, M.D., cured newborns of focal congenital HI without causing diabetes. The team used medical tests performed by interventional radiologists to guide the diagnosis and the delicate surgery on each infant’s pancreas. The surgical team performed a partial pancreatectomy, removing the diseased portion of the pancreas while leaving the rest of the organ intact.

Children’s Hospital is the only center in the United States, and one of only two in the world, to perform partial pancreatectomies for focal HI.

The researchers studied 34 patients with a median age of seven weeks who underwent a partial pancreatectomy between 1999 and 2002 at Children’s Hospital. Of those patients, 31 did not subsequently require medication to control their insulin levels. The remaining three children continued to require medical treatment for low blood sugar but, like the other 31, did not develop diabetes.

Along with Dr. Adzick, other Children’s Hospital investigators on the study included Charles Stanley, M.D., chief, Division of Endocrinology; Robin Kaye, M.D., chief of Interventional Radiology; and Eduardo Ruchelli, M.D., Department of Pathology.

The study was published in the March issue of the Journal of Pediatric Surgery.

NIH Announces Policy Change on Subcontracts, Direct Cost Limitations
NIH recently changed its budgeting policies to remove any financial disincentive to establishing subcontractual agreements between collaborating institutions.

When investigators propose a subcontractual relationship, both the direct costs and the subcontractor’s facilities and administrative costs (previously known as indirect costs) are calculated as part of the proposal’s direct costs. This method of handling subcontractor costs typically is a problem when there are limitations on direct costs, which an application can request.

To alleviate the problem, NIH announced a policy change in the April 30 issue of the NIH Guide. Where a Program Announcement or Request for Applications includes a limitation on direct costs, consortium participants may request that facilities and administrative (F&A) costs excluded from the calculation to determine whether a direct cost limitation has been exceeded for these solicited applications.

The F&A costs requested by a consortium will continue to be reflected in the proposal budget, and such costs will continue to be awarded under the current practice.

It is unclear whether NIH will use this policy with regard to unsolicited proposals or restrictions on the percent growth between competitive renewals.

For guidance implementing the new policy, contact your Research Business manager at his or her direct extension or at the general number, ext. 4-4700.
Faculty Honors/Awards

On April 30, Anna Meadows, M.D., Division of Oncology, received the 2004 Distinguished Career Award from the American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. The award recognizes outstanding service and significant contributions to the understanding and treatment of pediatric blood diseases and cancer.

Dr. Meadows serves as medical director of the Cancer Survivorship Program in the Division and the Living Well After Cancer Program at the Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Her work with the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study was featured in a recent issue of *Penn Medicine*.

In addition, the Automotive Occupant Restraints Council (AORC) recently presented its highest honor, the Pathfinder Award, to Kristy Arbogast, Ph.D., director of field engineering for TraumaLink. The annual award honors contributions to automotive safety. Dr. Arbogast, who serves as a co-investigator on the Partners for Child Passenger Safety project and principal investigator for an automotive safety research project, received the award for her contributions in identifying the unique needs of children as motor-vehicle occupants.

CCRI Hosting ACRP Course on Pediatric Trials

On June 11, the Children's Clinical Research Institute (CCRI) is hosting a course from the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) on pediatric drug trials.

The ACRP course, titled “Performing Pediatric Trials: A Practical and Safe Approach,” aims to provide a forum for professionals involved in pediatric clinical research to discuss issues and trends in pediatric drug trials. In addition, the course will feature an interactive workshop emphasizing patient protection, study design, and quality and successful case histories.

Topics in the day-long course will include: issues in pediatric clinical research at the clinical site; government issues; study design and pediatric recruitment; ensuring quality issues in pediatric clinical research; patient protection issues and clinical trial implementation; relationship issues surrounding patient/research subject and physician/researcher; and co-founding issues in pediatric clinical research.

CCRI Medical Director Mark Schreiner, M.D., will be featured as one of three speakers at the event, which is open to healthcare professionals involved in pediatric clinical trials as well as physicians, principal investigators, clinical study coordinators, nurses, clinical research associates and other clinical research professionals. Continuing education credits are available for completing the course.

Course space is limited. The cost of the event is $695, though 20 percent discounts are available when three or more individuals from one organization register. Additional information and registration forms are available from [http://www.acrpnet.org/education/pediatric/pediatric.html](http://www.acrpnet.org/education/pediatric/pediatric.html).

Call For Hummeler Nominations

The Joseph Stokes Research Institute is accepting nominations for the annual Dr. Klaus and Mary Hummeler Research Prize, which recognizes the most outstanding laboratory or clinical research paper published by a member of the Stokes Institute. Eligible papers must have been published between July 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003.

The endowment provided by Dr. and Mrs. Hummeler provides $5,000 in research support for a senior Children’s Hospital author of the selected paper. Funds may be used for equipment, supplies, travel or other expenses related to research activities. The amount of the award may be reduced if multiple awardees are selected.

To nominate a publication, submit a copy of the paper and a nomination form to Roger Wood in Research Administration by Friday, June 4. Nomination forms are available on the Stokes Intranet ([http://stokes2.chop.edu/forms/2003_Announce.jpg](http://stokes2.chop.edu/forms/2003_Announce.jpg)) or in Research Administration.

Stokes Announces Murray Awardees

The Stokes Institute, in conjunction with the Department of Pediatrics, named five investigators as recipients of the annual Florence Murray award. The awards provide career-starting funds for doctoral-level investigators. The recipients of this year’s award and their research projects are:

Jahan Ara, Ph.D., Division of Neurology, investigating the role of neuropilin 2 in adult peripheral nerve regeneration

Anthony Gotter, Ph.D., Division of Human Genetics and Molecular Biology, focusing on the relationship between the gene Timeless, which has a role in genomic stability, and a binding partner

Sarah Hoen, M.D., Mbe, Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, conducting a study on parental decision making in peri-operative research for neonates in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit

Jimmy Huh, M.D., Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, investigating calpain inhibitor therapy for traumatic brain injury

Nataliya Zelikovsky, Ph.D., Division of Nephrology, researching non-adherence after renal transplantation related to medical complications, utilization of healthcare resources and financial costs

Children’s Hospital Awarded Patent

HIV infection continues to be a serious world health problem. While certain anti-HIV treatments are available, additional therapeutic agents are needed. Technology developed and recently patented by Steven Douglas, M.D., and Wen-Zhe Ho, M.D., Division of Allergy and Immunology, centers on methods for inhibiting HIV infection based on the novel discovery that a certain family of neuropeptides and their receptors are actively involved in the modulation of HIV infection in human cells. The technology offers new approaches to the design of new anti-HIV therapeutics.
**Summer Course, Workshops Offered Through Bioinformatics Alliance**

The Greater Philadelphia Bioinformatics Alliance has announced its 2004 summer short course and one-day workshops.

Through its Virtual Institute for Professional Training, the Alliance is offering a five-week module from June 7 to July 8 covering systems biology, microarrays and differential gene expression, pattern recognition and gene expression profiles, proteomics, and protein networks.

In addition, the Alliance established two one-day workshops. An "Introduction to Bioinformatics" workshop will be held on June 12 and again on June 26. A workshop on biomedical imaging will be held on June 19 and again on July 2.

**FYI**

- The General Clinical Research Center (GCRC) announced the availability of two awards for junior clinical investigators under the Clinical Research Feasibility Funds (CReFF) program sponsored by the NIH National Center for Research Resources. This program replaces the GCRC Junior Clinical Investigator award program. For more information, visit http://stokes2.chop.edu/forms/CreFF.pdf.
- The Stokes Institute is seeking nominees for Career Achiever and Young Achiever awards in basic scientific research from men and women from under-represented, multicultural communities. The winning nominees will be featured in the September edition of Science Spectrum magazine and at the Emerald Honors Conference for Research Science in Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 17-18. Nominations must be received by June 25. Internal nominations from the research community should be submitted to Judith Argon by June 1 for consideration for institutional submission. Details on the awards can be found at http://stokes.chop.edu/intranet/msro.htm.
- A Xenogen IVIS imaging system is now available for use in the laboratory of Phyllis Dennery, M.D., Division of Neonatology (Room 415 H, Abramson Research Center). The system detects and counts bioluminescence using a CCD camera and is optimized for in vivo imaging and ideal for monitoring gene expression. Contact Guang Yang, Ph.D., at ext. 6-5694 or at yanggu@email.chop.edu for more information.
- The Center for Childhood Communication will host the Third Annual Eastern Auditory Research Retreat on June 4. Approximately 60 scientists representing institutions from New York to Maryland are expected to attend the retreat, which will feature sessions covering auditory research topics, including aspects of central auditory processing, biomechanics, prosthetics and neural coding in the cochlea. Dr. Paul Fuchs of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine will deliver the keynote address. For further details, contact Bryan Crenshaw, Ph.D., at crenshaw@email.chop.edu.
- Notary services are now available Monday-Friday, 1:30 to 4:15 p.m. on the first floor of the Abramson Pediatric Research Center. Please contact Phyliss Quail at ext. 4-1418 with questions.

**Hospital Hosting Orientation to Biomedical Technology**

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia is participating in the Biomedical Technician Training Program (BTTP) launched by The Wistar Institute and the Community College of Philadelphia by hosting the “Orientation to Biomedical Technology” teaching session in May and June and providing laboratory space for the hands-on program.

The BTTP was established to address the shortage of experienced biomedical research technicians – skilled workers responsible for many of the routine activities in research laboratories. Now in its fifth year, the BTTP is a two-year program that provides classroom training and more than 714 hours of supervised experiential training.

Children’s Hospital investigators interested in providing internship training or hiring trainees who have completed the program should contact Dr. Bill Wunner at The Wistar Institute at wunner@wistar.upenn.edu or 215-898-3854.