Building Foundations for the Future in Pediatric Pulmonology

John L. Colombo, M.D. is UNMC and Children’s Hospital Academic Section Chief for Pediatric Pulmonology, the home of the Pediatric Pulmonology Center and the Nebraska Regional Cystic Fibrosis Center, a regional referral site for the diagnosis and treatment of infants and children with respiratory disorders and cystic fibrosis (CF) patients of all ages. Using state-of-the-art equipment and methods supported by ongoing research, physicians and staff provide diagnosis and treatment for a variety of often complex respiratory conditions.

As a result of his leadership and through the dedicated efforts of many, the University’s relationship with Children’s Hospital has evolved into a joint Pediatric Pulmonology program launched in July, 2004. According to Dr. Colombo, this endeavor is the result of at least ten years of dreaming, discussion, planning and development. Building upon both research, and clinical practice, and maximizing the unique contributions and strengths of each institution is the overarching goal.

Here at UNMC, academic research in pediatric pulmonology is led by Dr. Colombo and Dr. Paul Sammut. Medical services are provided in both settings; however, new and appropriate current patients are encouraged to be seen at the clinics in Children’s Hospital. Directed by Mark C. Wilson, MD and with Luke Noronha, MD, Respiratory Medical Services at Children’s provides consultation for the evaluation and treatment of infants, children and adolescents with disorders of the respiratory tract.

Bringing together two distinct institutions, each with its own organizational culture, has not been without challenges, particularly around duplication of effort at the outset. Clearly, the benefits have more than outweighed any challenges. A clear advantage is the dedicated number of physicians – currently five, with the total expected to rise to six by the summer of 2006 – and the more than 25 combined support staff on hand to assist with clinical services. At this point, Children’s clinical space needs are exceeding what is currently available; plans are underway to address this.

Related changes to
The Department of Pediatrics has recently gone through a 6 month period of developing materials for a review required by the Dean of the College of Medicine. This is part of a process for the accreditation of the Medical School and is done on a rotating basis. The review has been very helpful in changing our procedures in regard to data collection, maintenance of information on the department, and tracking of activity. It is easy to continually do a job without truly documenting what you are doing. The administrative team has put a great deal of effort into developing ongoing databases that will help us in future planning, future hiring, and in redistribution of our assets. The outcome of the review will be known sometime after the first of the year. This process itself was more important. A simple example would be consolidating all personnel data in a single database which allows correlation with our finances to be sure that they are appropriately distributed. In a time of decreasing state support, it is critical that we align our financial resources with our mission.

The other outcome was to realize how much each of you does. We have far fewer support staff for the amount of work than any other Department. The support from each Section is exceptional, and the dedication of our Faculty to excellence is stellar. This is not just an impression; it is backed by hard data.

This project has required significant resources and a great deal of dedication and extra effort by many individuals. The outcome is we are a more organized and accountable department that will fare us well in the future. This is a good way to begin a new year.
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Chapters

Residency Program Continues to Grow
by Erin Loucks, M.D., Co-Chief Resident

As we start a new year, it is a good time to reflect upon the important changes and improvements that are occurring within the residency program. It definitely has been a year of growth, as we continually try to improve the education of the residents in our program.

With the incorporation of a 30-hour shift limit, as well as the limitation of 80 hours per week averaged over a four week period, residents have discovered an improved focus on education and not just service. We continue to have Teaching Rounds most mornings with Patient Management Conference on Tuesdays. Noon conferences further contribute to our education goal. Third year residents are now required to present one Grand Rounds during the year, which has been a great experience for all residents involved. In addition, Pediatric Board review sessions have become incorporated into our standard education core.

We are excited about the changes we are about to make in our Community Health rotation starting in July 2006. As a part of the rotation, 2nd year residents will be spending a week in out-state Nebraska with a community pediatrician. This will allow for greater exposure to residents of pediatric care in communities outside of Omaha. The residents are very excited about this opportunity. We know this will be a great experience.

We continue to pride ourselves on the diversity of our resident group. This year’s intern group is no different. Resident’s medical training backgrounds include Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Florida and Iowa to name a few. We are currently in the recruitment process for next year’s interns, and are excited about the prospects! We feel our program has a lot to offer future pediatricians.

As our program continues to grow in new directions, we realize that our growth relies heavily on the teaching of community and hospital-based pediatricians, both general and sub-specialties, that contribute their time and energy to the education of the residents. We thank you! Without your efforts, we would have a much different program.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

4TH ANNUAL PEDIATRIC RESEARCH FORUM

May 12, 2006
Children’s Hospital
Omaha, Nebraska

Sponsored by the Departments of Pediatrics at Creighton University Medical Center, University of Nebraska Medical Center, and Children’s Hospital.
The Department of Pediatrics recently welcomed back one of their former residents. Dr. Heather Thomas joined the Pediatric Pulmonology section. Heather was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. She graduated from Westside High School in 1990 and went to Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, from which she graduated cum laude with honors with a BA in psychology in 1994. She graduated from St. George’s University School of Medicine in 1999. Following her residency, Heather moved to Cincinnati in July 2002 to start her pulmonary fellowship.

While Heather was in high school and college she swam competitively on a national level. She enjoys anything outside such as skiing, walking and, of course, swimming. She also enjoys reading “junk” novels. Spending time with her family is at the top of her “favorite things to do” list.

Heather married her husband, Leo Duman, in 2002. Leo currently works for Alegent Health in the IT Department. Heather and Leo welcomed their first child, a daughter, March 12, 2004 who they named Emma. They welcomed their second child, a baby boy, born on December 11, 2005 who weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces and was 20 inches long. They named him Leo Alexander Duman and will call him “Alex”. Heather and Leo have two dogs named Chloe and Lucy who are loveable mutts, and a guinea pig named Maurice.

Heather returned to Omaha in September 2005 to join the Pediatric Pulmonology section and is very thrilled to be back and closer to family and friends. Heather’s goals for her role in the section of Pediatric Pulmonology are to become a respected clinician and to be a role model to her kids.

We are thrilled that Heather returned to our department and are looking forward to a long tenure.

Learn more about UNMC Pediatrics at www.unmc.edu/Pediatrics