Arrhythmia-Genetics Clinic Offers
Comprehensive Care for Patients and Families

The era of molecular genetics is here and with it comes the need to address certain disorders common to multiple family members in a single clinic. The Arrhythmia – Genetics Clinic was started in November 2004 with the support of the Departments of Pediatrics and Internal Medicine and their respective Cardiology divisions. The clinic is held every Friday.

The purpose of the clinic is to provide an opportunity for entire families to be evaluated and to provide information and management in one location. Examples of genetic arrhythmia problems include diseases such as Long QT Syndrome, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (formerly IHSS), Brugada Syndrome, Polymorphic Catecholaminergic (or sometimes called Bidirectional) Ventricular Tachycardia, and Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Cardiomyopathy.

The services provided by Dr. Christopher C. Erickson, Cardiac Electrophysiologist and Associate Professor – Pediatrics/Internal Medicine, include single visit consultations or ongoing long-term care depending on the preference of the referring physician, exercise stress testing, epinephrine infusion challenges, pacemaker/ICD implantation and follow-up.

The Arrhythmia – Genetics Clinic also offers participation in research that involves mapping of the genetic mutation causing the family’s disease. Shelley Smith, Ph.D., molecular geneticist at Munroe-Meyer Institute, is a co-investigator of an ongoing IRB-approved protocol to identify the mutation in each family. It is anticipated that other projects will come forth from this clinic.

The Adult Arrhythmia – Genetics Clinic (primarily for adults and families involving parents and older adolescents) is conducted the second and fourth Friday mornings of each month in the UNMC Cardiovascular Clinic on the second floor of the Durham Outpatient Center. The Pediatric Arrhythmia – Genetics Clinic (primarily for young patients and families) is held the first and third Friday mornings.

Inside this issue:

From the Chairman 2
MMI 7th Annual Poster Session 2
Next Step—Autism Center 3
Next Step—Community Health Information Resources 4
Next Step—4th Annual Pediatric Research Forum 4
City MatCH 5
Juggling Act 6
From the Chairman’s Desk
by Bruce Buehler, M.D., Chairman, Department of Pediatrics

Research is a critical mission of the Department of Pediatrics and requires a lot of funding to recruit the best and brightest, and providing them a chance to be successful. We have been building research for the past 10 years and have accomplished a lot. We have recruited Dr. Shelley Smith, who has brought in multiple NIH grants; Dr. Pascale Lane, who has been successful in obtaining NIH funding; Dr. William Rizzo, who has eight continuous years of NIH funding; Dr. Wayne Fisher, who has an existing NIH grant; and Dr. Cathleen Piazza, who has several grants in progress for review. We are presently trying to recruit an Infectious Disease researcher who does translational research and we are actively recruiting a gastroenterologist with a research background. We also have Dr. Magda Peck, who has been continually successful in obtaining Maternal and Child Health grants, as well as funding through the CDC. All of these individuals also participate in the service and education mission of the department, while maintaining strong outside funding. We have sections like cardiology, gastroenterology, pulmonology, nephrology, genetics, infectious disease, and hematology/oncology that have multiple faculty members with national reputations and a strong history of research production through publications.

This is especially important when the pressures of clinical service and education are so great and, yet, faculty throughout the department have continued to produce major scientific advancements. I may not have highlighted all of the sections and individuals who are doing research, but, in reality, all individuals in the Department of Pediatrics are involved in some scholarly activity on a continual basis. This improves their ability to do patient care and teach. It also raises the respect and quality of the Department of Pediatrics at UNMC. For those who will be going on to private practice or fellowships, it is important to remember that you will always need to continue a scholarly interest in medicine, as it changes continuously and you need the ability to read scientific articles in a critical manner and utilize the important scientific facts from the publications. All pediatricians should be scholars and should do scholarly activities. I believe the quality of our faculty has set that standard for all graduating residents and students.

I want to thank every member of the department who takes the extra time and effort to improve the quality of life for children through their scholarly activities.

MUNROE-MEYER INSTITUTE’S 7TH ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY POSTER SESSION

April 26, 2006
12:00-1:30PM
West Atrium of the Durham Outpatient Center, UNMC

Interdisciplinary graduate students and staff of the Munroe-Meyer Institute will present their research / training.
E-Mail esteele @unmc.edu or 559-6430 for additional information.
Wayne Fisher, M.D., a former professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, is now the director of the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at the Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) at UNMC. During his tenure as a Hopkins researcher, Dr. Fisher served as the Executive Director for the Neurobehavioral Programs at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, Maryland and more recently as the Executive Director of the Marcus Behavior Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Fisher has co-authored over 115 research articles on severe behavior disorders among children with autism and developmental disabilities and related topics. He is a Research Grant (R01) recipient from the National Institute of Mental Health to study the functions of aberrant behavior displayed by children with autism.

Dr. Fisher's research team conducted the first population-based epidemiological investigations in the United States on autism, childhood onset, pervasive developmental disorder, and hyperlexia. In 1992, Dr. Fisher and colleagues published the first study showing that presenting stimuli in a choice arrangement led to more accurate identification of effective reinforcers for individuals with autism and developmental disorders. Under Dr. Fisher's direction, the Neurobehavioral Programs at the Kennedy Krieger Institute grew from a 4-bed inpatient service to 16 inpatient beds, 10-day treatment slots, and outpatient services for approximately 200 of the most severe cases of self-injury, aggression, and property destruction from Maryland and around the country. Similarly, Dr. Fisher developed a school, and day treatment, outpatient, and early intervention programs at the Marcus Behavior Center in Atlanta.

Dr. Fisher was recruited to MMI to direct the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders and to develop and expand research at MMI in the areas of autism and behavioral genetics. His goal is to train and supervise teams of clinical researchers and therapists who will conduct behavioral and functional analyses to better delineate behavioral phenotypes and to develop more refined and specific behavioral interventions for a variety of disorders, including autism, self-injurious behavior, and attention deficit disorder.

Dr. Cathleen Piazza joins Dr. Fisher's team at the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Dr. Piazza, also a Research Grant recipient from the National Institutes of Health, studies pediatric feeding disorders and their impact on behavior. Dr. Piazza most recently held the position of Director for the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program at the Marcus Behavior Center in Atlanta, Georgia. She also held the

*Autism (Continued on page 4)*
Consumer Health Information Resources
By Teresa Hartman, MLS
Head of Education, McGoogan Library of Medicine

Sometimes the most difficult aspect of research and evidence-based medicine is knowing what and where to look. The McGoogan Library of Medicine at UNMC has provided an excellent resource for not only researchers and physicians, but patients and families in search of information about their health.

The medical librarians at the McGoogan Library of Medicine have been serving the health information needs of all Nebraska citizens and those that are cared for by the University of Nebraska Medical Center through the Consumer Health Information Resource Service (CHIRS). Since 1984, consumers have contacted their public library or McGoogan Library directly for health information pertaining to drug, condition, and treatment questions. The advent of the Internet has made the librarian-mediated search service more, not less, valuable.

Instead of facing the unknown information sources on the Internet, and typing in a condition into a search engine only to wade through lists of strange links, Nebraskans may call or email their questions to the library for expert medical librarians to search evaluated sources for quality information, and receive full-text materials that the consumers may use for their general information and further discussion with their health professionals.

Maybe the parent of a child with a newly-diagnosed chronic condition, or a sibling wanting to know how to cope with an illness in the family, or a grandparent with a question about care-giving issues related to their grandchild with a rare disorder needs information. Maybe a new mother, waiting each day by a preemie’s crib, wondering about the most basic level of information surrounding the child and its condition could use reassurance from documented research. Each may find answers by calling CHIRS, participating in a reference interview gently led by an expert librarian, and receiving full-text, quality information in the mail.

For more information about CHIRS, or to request a search, go to http://www.unmc.edu/library/consumer, or call (402) 559-6221, or toll-free 1-866-800-5209.
Strengthening Urban Public Health; Championing Women, Children & Families

CityMatCH was originally founded by Magda G. Peck, Sc.D., who currently serves as the organization’s CEO and Senior Advisor. CityMatCH is a national membership organization of city and county health departments' maternal and child health (MCH) programs and leaders representing urban communities in the U.S. Dedicated to improving the health and well-being of urban women, children and families by strengthening the public health organizations and leaders in their communities, CityMatCH connects members from over 150 urban health departments for targeted MCH-related capacity-building, training and educational opportunities.

Initiated in 1988 as a special project of the Boston (MA) Department of Health and Hospitals, the expressed goal of CityMatCH was to improve the organization and delivery of services to urban families and children. Initial project activities were dedicated to developing an information base detailing the MCH activities of major health departments across the U.S. The information base revealed MCH programs were addressing activities including racial disparities in infant mortality, inadequate access to prenatal care, substance abuse in pregnancy, and interpersonal violence. The CityMatCH project evolved into a national organization in 1991 and came to UNMC.

CityMatCH holds the philosophy that all children and families deserve to be healthy and to achieve their optimal growth and development in the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of their lives. Responsibility for assuring this is shared by each individual, the family, the community and government at all levels. CityMatCH recognizes children and families living in urban areas have unique needs that must be addressed to achieve their fullest potential.

Over the years, CityMatCH has initiated a number of activities to achieve its mission; a selected few of those activities will be highlighted here. Perhaps best known is the Perinatal Periods of Risk (PPOR) approach. PPOR is a population-based tool, which can enable communities to better understand and respond to fetal and infant mortality. PPOR uses analysis of birth weight and gestational age as a way to measure and address racial disparities that exist in a community’s fetal-infant mortality.

As a comprehensive planning process, PPOR is designed to be integrated into the current local and state MCH and public health planning process. Since 2000, with funding from the CDC, the National March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, the HRSA’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau and with support from UNMC, CityMatCH has trained over 100 urban communities to utilize the PPOR approach.

For many years, CityMatCH has also advanced the DaTA Institute model promoting translation of data to action through a comprehensive, creative and active, year-long learning opportunity. Training focuses closely on three identified domains of effective data use: data, program and policy. This training offers data analysis skills essential to ensure accurate baseline and outcome measures, planning, monitoring and evaluating skills needed for creating/monitoring effective programs and decision-making and data strategy skills for creating evidence based policy.

In 1999, CityMatCH undertook a national training effort targeted at prevention of HIV transmission from mother to baby, known as perinatal HIV prevention, with dedicated funding from the CDC. CityMatCH entered into a new cooperative agreement with CDC last fall. Over the next 3 years, CityMatCH will collaborate with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to adapt the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review process to investigate and address cases of perinatal HIV exposures.

Annually, CityMatCH hosts a national conference providing opportunities to gain knowledge, skills, and tools to address MCH issues; to disseminate science and information for improving urban MCH, and to network and exchange promising practices with other MCH professionals. This year’s annual Urban MCH Leadership Conference is on August 19-22, 2006 in Providence, RI. (For more information or to register, visit http://www.citymatch.org/)

For more information, contact Maureen Fitzgerald, M.P.A., Coordinator for Policy and Communication at 402-561-7500 or E-mail at mfitzger@unmc.edu.
Juggling Research and Residency

Matt Sweney, HO II, recently matched into a neurology fellowship program at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He chose to pursue this training because he finds the science fascinating with challenges that will provide a lifetime of learning.

While a student at UNMC, Dr. Sweney took an externship in Pediatric Neurology, which inspired his research endeavors. Over the course of medical school and residency he has taken the research in new directions.

“I initially knew research would be an asset when looking at further training. However, I have since realized that, more than anything, I like investigating problems and seeing what kind of discoveries come about,” said Dr. Sweney when asked if fellowship training was the primary impetus for pursuing research.

Juggling the responsibilities of residency training and a new family is difficult. Adding research to that mix is very difficult. However, from the day he started training, Dr. Sweney has continued his research interests.

“Residency is tough enough on its own, especially when you add in family and personal responsibilities,” he said. “Surprisingly, research—depending on the problem you are looking at—is fairly manageable.”

Several residents over the years have conducted research during their residency training. The research provides an opportunity to look at unique problems and to work with faculty and other residents.

“I think one of the most important things to think about is the scope of the problem you are looking at,” he said. “Research can work in residency and with a family if you are realistic about how much time and attention you can give it.”

The work Dr. Sweney has been doing with Dr. John Schmidt, HO III, under the mentoring of Drs. Howard Needelman and Brad Schaefer will be discussed at the May 12th Research Forum at Children’s Hospital.

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