TECHNOLOGY AND TLC:

Pediatric Health Care In Tampa Bay

By Mary Ellen Collins

Pediatric health care has come a long way since the days when parents had to go home at the end of visiting hours, and needles automatically meant pain for little patients. Hospitals across Tampa Bay are creating environments that enable them to deliver health care in ways that are stressless, streamlined, and supportive to patients and their families.

St. Joseph's Children's Hospital, for one, emphasizes the strong role of child advocacy and family centered care in providing for the health and well being of their patients. "There's been a big change in how we view the parent role in a child's care," says Karen Shea, director of patient services. "As a children's hospital, part of our core mission is to advocate for children's needs...We recognize that the parent is the number one support in a child's life and they need them by their side. Parents are very much a part of our team, and all of our patient rooms are family suites that have room for parents to stay overnight."

The 174-bed hospital primarily serves children and families in Hillsborough County, and has four centers of excellence: cancer and blood diseases; the children's heart center; intensive care units; and the Steinbrenner Emergency Center for Children. Their Level III (the highest level) neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) provides support for 6,000 deliveries a year, and is actually housed in St. Joseph's Women's Hospital so that babies can remain close to their mothers. A neonatal transport team also travels by ambulance or helicopter to pick up infants from throughout central Florida and bring them to the NICU for treatment. The hospital has the largest pediatric cardiovascular surgical program in the state; and in 1996, it became the first Florida hospital to participate in Rotary International's "Gift of Life" program. This affiliation has resulted in more than 85 children from other countries coming to St. Joseph's for life-saving surgery.



(Top) Child Life Specialists at the Children's Medical Center at TGH work with patients to ease their fears and explain medical treatments.
(Bottom) WFLA's Stacie Schaible looks on during the recent All Children's Telethon as baby Emily Leone rests in mom Mary's arms in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Emily required surgeries for a heart defect and a diaphragmatic hernia.

Although parents will appreciate the hospital's state-of-the-art treatment and technology, most young patients view their hospital experience through a completely different lens. In an effort to lessen the traumatic aspect of a hospital stay, St. Joseph's has developed a *pain free initiative*, which provides every staff member with a toolkit that includes both pharmacologic methods for handling pain and toys for distraction. Infants who are facing a painful procedure receive a sucrose pacifier because it is scientifically proven that when sugar hits an infant palate, the baby has a response that also lessens the ability to feel pain. For older children, they use the Epicure Easy Touch, a laser device (decorated like an animal) that vastly reduces the time it takes for a topical numbing agent to take effect before they can give a shot or start an I.V. Less pain for the patient, less time for the nurse.

St. Joseph's extends their child health and safety advocacy to the community via child advocates who work on getting laws changes or added; conduct car seat safety checks; and work with the public relations office to promote drowning prevention. Last year, the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions recognized the hospital for having a child advocate in their pediatric emergency center to teach parents ways to avoid making a return trip. Advocates staff the emergency center during peak hours from 3 to 8 p.m., distributing car seats, gun locks, bike helmets, and educational materials.

On the other side of the Bay, All Children's Hospital, which has been named one of the top 20 children's hospitals in the U.S. by *Child* Magazine, is in major growth mode. Founded in 1926 as the American Legion Hospital for Crippled Children, today it is a 216-bed teaching hospital, and in 2008, will be a brand new, 240-bed facility with all single rooms.

"Not only will the individual rooms have enough space for parents who want to spend the night, but they will also better accommodate new bedside technologies, and increase patient safety and infection control," says Jean Francis, senior vice president of operations.

Features of the new hospital include physical layouts that will facilitate more efficient care. For example, pediatric cardiac patients will no longer have to move from place to place for tests and treatments because all cardiac care will be consolidated in one place. One half of a floor will house 16 cardiac intensive care beds, six step down beds, two operating rooms, and three cardiac cath labs; and all of the staff in that area will be highly specialized in cardiac disease.

New parents of the tiniest patients will benefit from a partnership in which Bayfront Medical Center is leasing a floor in the new facility for their obstetrics service. Babies who need special care can be quickly moved from Bayfront's delivery room upstairs to All Children's 84-bed neonatal unit, the largest in Florida, which will be set up so that every family has privacy and the ability to sit at the baby's bedside.

Francis explains that the NICU will also have two apartment-like spaces called transition-to-home rooms where "families can spend the night and get the feel of how it will be to actually take care of their baby independently … but they'll do it in a protective environment, with staff nearby."

Oncology and hematology patients, whose hospital stays often run into weeks and months, will get some welcome freedom thanks to special air handlers that will filter the air in those entire units. This will make it safe for immunocompromised kids to leave their rooms



and spend more time in the adjacent teen room, school room, and play room. "The new hospital will allow us to be very adaptable and give us the ability to accommodate anything that comes up. We're building the backbone of the hospital so that we can adapt to new technology very quickly," says Francis. "Very few people get to build a new hospital from the ground up. It's an opportunity of a lifetime."

Tampa Bay residents are fortunate to have access to two stellar children's hospitals, but they can also look to pediatric units in other area hospitals for an impressive array of children's health services. Kids who walk into University Community Hospital's pediatric care center may think they've taken a wrong turn and landed in the jungle, thanks to the creative artistry of Busch Gardens staff. Colorful, jungle-themed décor provides a unique setting for the 29-bed center that is the only provider of critical care services for children in northern Hillsborough and eastern Pasco counties. The center handles almost every area of pediatric health care except cardiac surgery, and is the only center in Tampa Bay that includes a specialization in pediatric craniofacial reconstruction.

Dr. James Orlowski, medical director of the pediatric care center, explains the somewhat confusing designation between their Level III neonatal ICU and Level I pediatric ICU.

"Level III is the highest level of neonatal intensive care and Level I is the highest level of pediatric intensive care ... the highest ranking means we can take care of anything that comes through the door ... the smallest, sickest babies to the most complex problems."

Significant involvement in the field of pediatric ethics also distinguishes University Community Hospital. In addition to publishing and making national presentations, staff members teach ethics to USF medical students and in other University programs. They cover sensitive topics including confidentiality, persistent vegetative states, using children in clinical research, and

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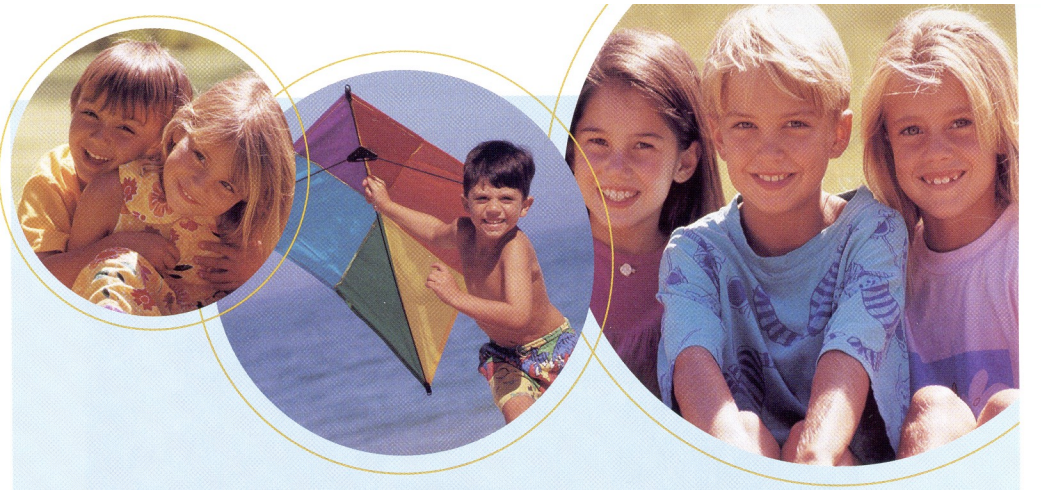


HELP KIDS LEAD UPBEAT LIVES

Our children are our most precious resource. We all want to ensure them the best opportunities for a bright future. But our children are at risk. Recent research suggests that if childhood obesity continues to increase, our current generation of children could become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents. We need to take action – now.

As a leader in the fight to reduce death and disability from heart disease and stroke, the American Heart Association has committed resources to reverse the rise in childhood obesity and raise a healthier generation. Now, in alliance with the Clinton Foundation, the Association seeks to raise public awareness about the serious threat posed by this growing public health problem and take steps to improve our children's health.

This is not just about kids who are already overweight or obese. It's about kids of all shapes and sizes, to control their health and establish lifelong healthy habits that emphasize balance, better nutrition and increased activity. This initiative will be a positive, optimistic, inclusive movement that speaks uniquely to young people.

In the fall, the American Heart Association will launch an online, interactive Web site for children ages 9 – 13 teaching heart-healthy habits by encouraging good nutrition and increased physical activity. By developing heart-healthy lifestyles in childhood, future generations of Americans will reduce their risks for cardiovascular disease and live longer, healthier lives.

Please join us in empowering our children to be healthy adults. Visit americanheart.org/children to download age-appropriate worksheets you can do with your children.

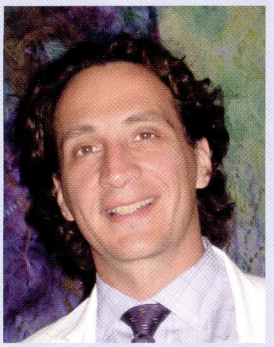
Top Ten Ways to Help Children Develop Healthy Habits:

1. Be a positive role model.
2. Get the whole family active.
3. Limit TV, video game and computer time.
4. Encourage physical activities that children really enjoy.
5. Be supportive.
6. Set specific goals and limits.
7. Don't reward children with food.
8. Make dinnertime a family time.
9. Make a game of reading food labels.
10. Stay involved.

—Erica Rogers, Senior Communications Director
American Heart Association

DR. CARLOS SILVA, M.D.

Laser Vein Therapy



Dr. Silva recently opened the Laser Institute of New Tampa to provide laser vein therapy and hair removal to the growing area of New Tampa.

A unique aspect of the Institute is that two physicians and one registered nurse perform the procedures. "Usually, at other clinics, technicians operate the machines and patients usually don't get to see a physician. Dr. Belof and I are both board certified physicians with training and experience in the care of skin. We assess which people are ideal for laser treatment and which ones are not, because, depending on your skin type or the type of varicose veins you have, laser treatment may not be effective," said Dr. Silva.

Dr. Silva received his medical degree from the University of Illinois and he has practiced internal medicine in the New Tampa area since 1999. Dr. Beth Belof went to New Jersey Medical School and did her residency at Florida Hospital in Orlando. If you are interested in laser vein therapy, hair removal and other vascular treatments contact the Laser Institute of New Tampa for a Free consultation.

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how much say children should have about their own care. "We absolutely believe that a child should have a voice ...based on maturity level and ability to understand [the issues being discussed]," says Orlowski.

That compassion and respect for the individual child is common thread in UCH's approach. Parents are encouraged to spend the night with their children, and all procedures such as having blood drawn or an I.V. started take place in a treatment room rather than in the child's room. "We make the child's room a 'sacred space' by not doing procedures there. We do our best to make the hospital as stress-free as possible for the children," Orlowski explains.

Tampa General Hospital's children's medical center includes a nine-bed pediatric intensive care unit and a 42-bed Level III neonatal intensive care unit. They are one of only five hospitals in Florida to have ECMO (extra corporeal membrane oxygenation), a lifesaving treatment for newborns with severe breathing problems.

"It is a tremendous technology," says Claudia Mahoney, Director of Women's and Children's Services. "Eighty-five percent of the babies who have the treatment survive." And to ensure that every baby gets a safe and healthy start, TGH gives an infant car seat to the parents of every newborn.

The hospital has a very strong nephrology program, which includes performing kidney transplants and offering the only pediatric outpatient hemodialysis unit in Hillsborough County, and one of only three in the state. The hospital's other distinctions include a rehabilitation center with a strong pediatric component; having a certified Regional Poison Center which provides coverage for 6 million residents in central and southwest Florida; and being home to Tampa's only Ronald McDonald House, which accommodates 14 families.

In many cases, local hospitals may provide the perfect solution for a child's heath care needs. Both Morton Plant and Mease Countryside rely on dedicated



Children are not simply "miniature adults." The Children's Medical Center at TGH has the proper equipment and specially trained staff to care for pediatric patients.

"hospitalists"– physicians who care for patients just while they're at the hospital. This arrangement enables primary care pediatricians to turn the care of their hospitalized patients over to the hospitalists so that they can remain available to see other patients in their office.

"Morton Plant Hospital treats all pediatric medical conditions except those that require intensive care or critical care," says Dr. Daniel Plasencia, medical director for the pediatric hospitalist service. In addition, the hospital has a 14-bed pediatric behavioral health crisis unit for children and adolescents who need short-term intensive treatment. The unit had 1,015 admissions last year, with the most prevalent diagnoses being depressive or anxiety disorders, or conduct disorders.

Mease Countryside Hospital's community-based pediatric program, which treats close to 1,000 children a year, just expanded their pediatric unit from 15 to 20 beds. Asthma and gastroenterological illnesses are the most common problems among their patients; and they also have the only level III neonatal intensive care unit in North Pinellas or Pasco County. The hospital is also particularly proud of Dr. Parrish Winesett, a pediatric neurologist who has begun to develop a pediatric neurodiagnostic program that is drawing patients from as far away as Orlando and Immolakee.

What does this mean for local parents? They should feel reassured that thousands of caregivers across our region believe that alleviating a child's pain has as much to do with compassion and support as it does with technology and treatment. And fortunately, our hospitals have an impressive abundance of all four. Ⓜ