



Neurosciences Update

Second Quarter, 2008

A Note from the Chief Medical Officer, Children's Neurosciences department



Dear Colleagues,

The Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Neurosciences department is pleased to bring you the second quarter 2008 edition of *Neurosciences Update*.

Studies show that by the age of 16, more than 40 percent of children have had significant back pain, and 13 percent experienced recurrent back pain that led to disabling consequences. Pediatric spine care is one of the more underserved areas of pediatric medicine. This edition of *Neurosciences Update* will focus on the Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program.

At the Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program, we are addressing the growing need for comprehensive neuro spine care for pediatric patients. With the leadership of David Wrubel, M.D., Medical Director, and the addition of Barun Brahma, M.D., Pediatric Neurosurgeon, Children's is well-equipped to make a difference in the lives of children being treated for a wide variety of spinal disorders.

Also, there is other important news from the Children's Neurosciences program including: the hiring of a new senior research coordinator, the launch of the first annual Epilepsy Camp at Camp Twin Lakes and recent neurosciences media coverage.

We appreciate your comments and welcome your suggestions for future issues. E-mail Jill Morrissey, Neurosciences Service Line Director, at jill.morrissey@choa.org with any questions or suggestions.

Roger J. Hudgins, M.D.
Pediatric Neurosurgeon
Chief Medical Officer, Neurosciences

The Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids Program, An Overview
David Wrubel, M.D.
Pediatric Neurosurgeon
Medical Director, Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program

When the Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program began several years ago, there were many important obstacles to overcome. The public perception of back injury, or chronic back pain, was that it was mostly an adult problem. Changing public perception begins with physicians and



community outreach, which would only be possible through a coordinated effort by the Children's Neurosciences program.

Children's addressed the needs of this underserved population by opening one of the only multidisciplinary pediatric neuro spine centers in the nation. Prior to beginning the program, it was clear one of the major issues for our patient families was trying to coordinate office visits with multiple specialists at different locations at different times. This program offers the added convenience of seeing all necessary healthcare providers with a single office visit.

The Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program has a specially trained staff to treat children with complex neurosurgical spinal disorders. The team consists of specialists from neurosurgery, neurology, neuropsychology, pain management, neuroradiology and orthotics. The comprehensive nature of the program and access to a variety of specialists offered can eliminate the need for surgery in many cases. For patients requiring surgery, our program collaborates with orthopaedic, general, thoracic and plastic surgeons. After surgery, or often times instead of surgery, these patients typically need extensive rehabilitation, which is available through the program's physical and occupational therapists.

The comprehensive approach of this program also allows for better sharing of information among the clinical team, leading to improved, seamless patient care. This culture of information sharing not only improves current patient outcomes but also gives clinicians the opportunity for extensive peer mentoring, developing the skills and techniques to treat the needs of future children. This atmosphere of learning and development is coupled with the opportunity for research efforts.

Research is critical to improving the bed-side care for our patients, and our comprehensive approach provides a platform for research efforts to better understand and treat the complex neurosurgical conditions facing our patients. This may include providing for cervical instability in patients with Down syndrome; management and outcome analysis of pediatric disc herniation; and new fusion approaches to the pediatric occipitocervical and thoracolumbar junction. Sharing information and research, physicians will be able to work together to develop novel approaches to common and more complex problems.

Visit www.choa.org/neurospine for more information about the Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program.

Program News

A new patient intake form for referring physicians is now online for the Children's Neuro Spine Care for Kids program. Encourage your fellow providers to use this great new resource. A preregistration form for patient families will be completed during the coming months. Visit www.choa.org/neurospine for details.

News and Notes

- The first annual Epilepsy Camp will be Labor Day weekend, Aug. 29 to Sept. 1, 2008, at Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, Ga. The camp is open to all epilepsy patients age 7 to 14. Visit www.choa.org/epilepsycamp or e-mail epilepsycamp@choa.org for more information.
- Dr. Hudgins was a featured speaker at the 2008 Children's Circle of Care North American Leadership Conference (NALC), June 19, in Denver, showcasing the impact of private giving on pediatric healthcare. A crowd of nearly 1,000

prominent donors from around the country learned about the benefits of the intra-operative magnetic resonance imaging (iMRI) technology. Dr. Hudgins' talk raised awareness about how community and clinical personnel can come together to improve patient care within neurosciences, capturing the attention of a highly influential audience.

- WAGA-TV (FOX) aired a story May 5, 2008 about a patient from Tuscaloosa, Ala., who traveled to Children's to receive a brain tumor resection due to the added benefit of our intra-operative magnetic resonance imaging (iMRI) system. Visit the [WAGA-TV \(FOX\) Web site](#) to view the story online.
- Dr. Hudgins was honored at the 25th Anniversary Fundraising Celebration of the Brain Tumor Foundation for Children. Dr. Hudgins was recognized by the master of ceremonies, Sanjay Gupta, M.D., Chief Medical Correspondent for CNN, for his many contributions to pediatric neurosurgery.
- *RT Image*, a national trade publication for radiation technology, published a feature story in the May issue about the benefits of the iMRI technology. Robin Guthrie, B.S.N., R.N., and Carol Totten, R.T., were interviewed for the story. Visit the [RT Image Web site](#) to view the story online.
- Physician publication *péds* featured a story in the spring 2008 issue about Zack Link, the first patient to undergo surgery at Children's using the new iMRI scanner. Visit the [Children's Web site](#) to view the story online.
- The Children's Neurosciences department is proud to add Dina Schwam, Senior Research Coordinator, to the team this past March. Schwam comes from the Clinical Research department at Children's, and now, her new role focuses solely on neurosciences research. We are happy to have her as a new addition to our team.