We understand that no surgery is simple. That is why patients need surgeons who are pediatric-trained and experienced in treating a wide range of conditions. Our team of pediatric general surgeons includes:

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Surgery Update is a newsletter from Children’s Physician Group–Pediatric Surgery intended to keep you informed regarding the latest in pediatric general surgery.

In this issue
• Clinical research in neonatal surgery
• Program news and announcements

Call 404-785-6895 (Scottish Rite) or 404-785-8787 (Egleston) to make a referral or to discuss potential surgical treatments for your patients.
Visit choa.org/cpgsurgery for more information.
Clinical research in neonatal surgery

An update on current studies at Children's

Neonatal surgery is a cornerstone of clinical and basic science research directed toward the development of evidence-based practices and better treatment for neonatal surgical conditions. At Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, pediatric surgeons have teamed up with neonatologists and other medical specialists to discover and develop treatment strategies for surgical diseases. Pediatric surgeons at Children's are involved in multiple neonatal surgical projects, which include multicenter randomized trials, translational studies, national databases and multicenter retrospective studies. In this article, we highlight some of the surgical neonatal research at Children's.

Necrotizing Enterocolitis Surgical Trial (NEST)

The Necrotizing Enterocolitis Surgical Trial (NEST) is a Neonatal Research Network study comparing the effectiveness of surgical procedures, laparotomy and drainage, both commonly used to treat necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) and isolated intestinal perforations (IP) in extremely low birth weight infants (less than 1,000 grams). The study is a randomized controlled trial to compare the effectiveness of laparotomy versus drainage for treating NEC or IP in extremely low birth weight infants. The primary outcome to be measured is a repairment-free survival at 18 to 22 months old. In addition to collecting detailed information on the randomized infants, the study group is collecting information on more than 300 nonrandomized infants with NEC or IP who were enrolled in a preference cohort.

After six years of enrollment, NEST reached its goal of 310 randomized subjects and was the fourth-largest contributor to randomized trials, translational studies, national databases and multicenter retrospective studies. In this article, we highlight some of the surgical neonatal research at Children’s.

Translational neonatal surgical studies

• Impact of breast milk on surgical outcomes: Pediatric surgeons and neonatologists at Children's are prospectively studying infants who receive breast milk. This is funded by a local donor.
• Prospective analysis of neonatal gut tissue: Funded by the Children’s Friends research grant, pediatric surgeons and neonatologists are examining cytokine patterns in neonatal intestine after resection for NEC. Preliminary results have shown that both IL-22 and RegIIIγ mRNA expression is reduced in resected NEC tissue when compared to controls. Thus, human NEC tissue exhibits evidence of reduced neutrophil activity compared to control tissue.
• Definitive perineal drainage in the extremely low birth weight infant with IP: a prospective pilot study of the predictive value of abdominal ultrasound. In collaboration with radiology, pediatric surgeons are looking for ultrasound findings that may correlate with outcomes in neonates under perineal drainage for IP.

With access to two busy tertiary neonatal units, pediatric surgeons at Children's have seized the opportunity to contribute to better evidence-based practices in neonatal surgical care. By using what we discover through clinical trials and studies, we help provide quality care to newborns and ensure the most up-to-date information and treatments are made available to patients and their families.

News and announcements

Raval and McCarthy receive grant

Malv U Raval, MD, MS, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Surgery at Emory University School of Medicine, and co-investigator Ian McCarthy, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Emory University Department of Economics, were awarded a national competitive $1.1 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Their goal is to study the value of children's surgical care using payment data at children's hospitals as compared to non-children's hospitals for commonly performed surgical procedures. This study will test for any quality or price differentials among children’s hospitals and non-children's hospitals, then examine the sources of any such differentials with particular interest in the role of hospital market structure and competition as potential drivers of high-cost care.

Results of this study will inform patients, physicians, hospitals and payers by encouraging price transparency and cultivating the value of children's surgical care. Their goal is to study the value of children's surgical care using payment data at children's hospitals as compared to non-children's hospitals for commonly performed surgical procedures. This study will test for any quality or price differentials among children’s hospitals and non-children's hospitals, then examine the sources of any such differentials with particular interest in the role of hospital market structure and competition as potential drivers of high-cost care.

Contact Arun Bhata at aruna.bhata@emory.edu if you would like to learn more about the trip.

Shorter wait times

We experience wait times that are shorter than normal for general surgery cases and have availability for next-day appointments in some instances. Please call 404-785-D0CS (3627) to refer a patient.

Children’s pediatric surgery team volunteers in Peru

A team from Children’s completed its second mission to Yaritac, Peru, in February. Led by Aruna Bhata, MD, the 13-person team spent a week performing surgery in the high jungle of Peru. A CPR course led by Egleston hospital nurse Mary Ann Cornwall was a huge success and drew near 20 medical professionals and community members. A global health survey conducted during the week-long trip has been accepted as a poster presentation at an international meeting.

Contact Aruna Bhata at aruna.bhata@emory.edu if you would like to learn more about the trip.

Surgical locations

We perform surgeries at Egleston hospital, Scottish Rite hospital, Children’s at Emory Mark O Bullock Surgery Center and Children’s at Satellite Boulevard Outpatient Surgery Center.