A “MUST READ” FOR EVERY GROWN-UP WHO CARES ABOUT KIDS

Mark Your Calendars!
2007 Events Benefiting the Steele Center:

April 21
“Children Helping Children”
PANDA Fashion Show (Phoenix)

April 14
Active Women’s 20-30 Club
The Red Carpet Event

June 9
Father’s Day Council
Fathers of the Year Dinner

August 24
Tee Up for Tots Golf Tournament

October 12-13
Raise a Racquet for Kids

For more information about these events, please visit our Web site at www.steelecenter.arizona.edu.

Fifteen years ago, a vision of hope came to fruition with the creation of the Steele Children’s Research Center. Today, the children of Southern Arizona continue to inspire our physicians and researchers to discover better treatments and cures for devastating pediatric diseases. In 2007, we’ll celebrate our 15-year anniversary of successes and continued commitment to a healthier future for our children. This special logo will be used throughout the year to commemorate this milestone.

“We are passionate about improving the health of our precious children through teaching, healing and research, the key to conquering pediatric diseases.”

Fayez K. Ghishan, MD
Director, Steele Children’s Research Center
The year 2007 commemorates the 15-year anniversary for the Steele Center! We have grown so much over the past 15 years as we continue our research efforts to discover novel treatments and cures for pediatric illnesses and expand clinical services to improve children's health.

On that note, I am excited to announce that in the spring of 2007, we will open the “PANDA Children’s Aerodigestive Disorders Center” at the Steele Children’s Research Center. This center has been made possible by the dedicated work of our volunteer group, the PANDAs—People Acting Now Discover Answers. It is through their support and hard work that the center has become a reality, and we are so grateful for this wonderful gift.

The PANDA Children’s Aerodigestive Disorders Center will be both a clinical and research facility. It will be the only one of its kind in the entire state of Arizona. The center will serve children who are suffering from eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders—disorders of the digestive tract caused by allergies to food and airborne allergens. These disorders are known as “EE” for eosinophilic esophagitis, and “EG” for eosinophilic gastroenteritis (a more debilitating form of EE). Children with EE or EG often fail to grow, suffer from nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, choking, cramping and diarrhea. Arizona has far more cases of EE/EG than the national average, yet there is no place in the western U.S. where children can receive dedicated care for this painful disease.

I will manage the center with pediatric allergist/immunologist Michael Daines, MD, pediatric pulmonologist Cori Daines, MD, and a nutritionist. We recently recruited the Daines from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, and are excited about the new expertise they bring to the Southwest. Moreover, we will conduct research to discover better treatments and ultimately a cure for EE/EG. This is an exciting time for the Steele Center!

I am continually grateful to our volunteer groups—the Arizona Elks Major Projects, Father’s Day Council, the PANDA’s, the Active Women’s 20/30 Club, the Sara Courtney Memorial Walk/Run, Tee Up For Tots, Raise a Racquet for Kids and Desert Christian Middle School, who work tirelessly year to year on behalf of the Steele Center. Your commitment to improving the health of children inspires and energizes me and I thank you for your support.

Warm Regards,

Fayez K. Ghishan, MD
Horace W. Steele Endowed Chair in Pediatric Research
Director, Steele Children’s Research Center
Professor and Head, UA Department of Pediatrics
WHY RESEARCH MATTERS:  
A Parent’s Perspective  
by April Lochhead

March 11, 2005 is a date forever etched in our memory. It is the day my husband Ed and I were told that Danny, our 6½ year old son, had a confirmed diagnosis of Ewing’s Sarcoma. Although Ewing’s—a form of bone cancer—was considered very “treatable,” it didn’t change our shock and horror of the diagnosis.

“Ewing’s Sarcoma is considered very “treatable,” but the family has cancer. Our family has survived cancer and we are here to tell the story. Again, thank you Steele Center for all you do for the patients—past, present and future.

The event raised approximately $29,000 and will fund a graduate student researcher for one year.

“For the families who have lost loved ones, and the survivors who are still fighting the good fight, our goal is to raise awareness about the need for continued research and support,” says Jennifer Uno, PhD, a promising young Steele Center investigator working on a study led by Fayez K. Ghishan, MD. Dr. Uno made a discovery that advances the understanding of the relationship between IBD and osteopenia (decreased bone-mineral density). "It’s pretty interesting, most people don’t think of a connection between their bones and their gut, but the two are inextricably linked,” she says.

The study, “We have discovered an important piece of the puzzle. This is the first step in a very long process to eventually develop novel therapies to combat bone disease associated with IBD.”

Dr. Uno and Dr. Ghishan

Every year, more than 30,000 children are diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), a painful gastrointestinal disorder. IBD is a chronic inflammation of the intestinal tract that causes fatigue, diarrhea, stomach pain, and weight loss. The two most common forms of IBD are Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, and they usually strike children and young adults between the ages of 10-19.

But did you know that children and adults suffering from IBD also have an increased risk for bone disease, like osteoporosis? And for growing children with IBD, healthy bones are critical to their growth. Although reduced bone mass is a known complication of IBD, the reasons for this are not completely understood.

A new finding at the Steele Center, however, sheds light on this mystery. ‘Phosphate is one of the main components of your bones, along with calcium—both are needed to develop strong and healthy bones,” Dr. Uno explains. "One gene that regulates phosphate is named ‘PHEX,’ so we wanted to discover if PHEX was impacted by cytokines.”

Dr. Uno and her colleagues found that the cytokine ‘TNF-alpha’ down-regulates PHEX. “This is like turning the light down with a dimmer,” explains Dr. Uno. "TNF-alpha turns down the efficacy of PHEX, so phosphate can’t do its job to strengthen bones, and consequently they lose density.”

“We have discovered an important piece of the puzzle. This is the first step in a very long process to eventually develop novel therapies to combat bone disease associated with IBD,” says Dr. Uno.

The study, “The Role of TNF-alpha in Down-Regulation of Osteoblast Phex Gene Expression in Experimental Murine Colitis” was published recently in the prestigious journal Gastroenterology. “This is a great accomplishment,” says Dr. Ghishan. He is proud of this aspiring researcher whom he has mentored over the past four years. “Dr. Uno is an outstanding researcher with a fantastic future ahead of her. I’m expecting more great discoveries from her,” he says.
Resident Receives Grant to Screen Newborns for Congenital Heart Defects

When a child is born, a variety of screening tests are conducted to detect certain congenital disorders not visible at birth. Soon after delivery, the newborn’s hearing is checked and a blood sample is collected and analyzed. Blood tests determine if the newborn has one of many metabolic, blood and hormone disorders, even cystic fibrosis, to name a few. As many as 30 tests may be conducted on blood samples, depending on the state the child was born in. But no test exists to determine if the newborn has a congenital heart defect.

This apparent gap in newborn screenings inspired third-year resident Michael Seckeler, MD, to apply for a grant from the UA Sarver Heart Center to test for congenital heart defects—one of the most common birth defects that affect approximately 35,000 newborns every year.

Dr. Seckeler received the grant to expand his pilot study currently being conducted at UMC. The goal is to identify newborns with CCHD—cyanotic congenital heart disease. CCHD occurs when pure, oxygen-rich blood mixes with venous blood, resulting in an excess of deoxygenated blood in the system. These defects often result in heart failure and even death in untreated infants. Newborns with CCHD can present with cyanosis or bluish coloration of the skin, which makes diagnosis easier. “But often, babies born with CCHD don’t show any symptoms. Their problems usually emerge within the first four weeks of life, possibly resulting in congestive heart failure or even death,” says Dr. Seckeler. “This problem can be prevented with a simple test called pulse oximetry.” Currently, newborns at UMC are receiving pulse oximetry tests after 24 hours of life, and Dr. Seckeler is using his grant money to expand this screening to other hospitals in Tucson.

Pulse oximetry is a non-invasive, inexpensive and simple test conducted on the newborn after 24 hours of life. It consists of a small, disposable probe attached to the newborn’s toe for about one minute. Pulse oximetry measures the percentage of oxygen saturation in the blood. “This is a potentially life-saving test,” says Dr. Seckeler. “We believe that routine use of pulse oximetry in the newborn nursery as a universal screening test will detect asymptomatic newborns with CCHD,” he explains. “This will lead to earlier diagnosis, earlier interventions and improved outcomes for babies with CCHD. This simple test will provide additional reassurance for parents that their newborn is going home healthy.”

Dr. Seckeler’s mentor Scott Klewer, MD, Associate Professor and principal investigator of the study, is proud of this budding pediatric cardiologist. “Establishing a simple, informative screening test for newborns will have a dramatic impact on a large number of babies in Arizona. This is a unique and valuable opportunity for a pediatric resident-in-training. Mike’s hard work and determination have been instrumental for the initiation of this important project,” he says.

After finishing the residency program at the UA, Dr. Seckeler will complete a fellowship in pediatric cardiology. “I’m excited about a career as a pediatric cardiologist,” says Dr. Seckeler. “This study provides a great foundation in conducting clinical research, and I’m grateful for this opportunity.”
In Memoriam

Sidney Slim Morse

October 27, 1934 – February 1, 2006

The Steele Children’s Research Center lost a good friend on February 1, 2006 when Sidney Slim Morse passed away while undergoing treatment for leukemia at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Sid and Faye Morse moved to Tucson from Los Angeles in 1994. They embraced Tucson and quickly became well-known and well-loved members of our community.

Sid was an advocate for children, healthcare and education. He was named a 1984 Father of the Year in Los Angeles and was a founding member of the board of directors of Father’s Day Council Tucson, where he served for 12 years until his death. Father’s Day Council Tucson has raised more than $1 million to benefit research dedicated to finding a cure for type 1 diabetes (formerly known as juvenile diabetes). FDC Tucson pledges all proceeds from its fundraising efforts to support the type 1 diabetes program at the Steele Children’s Research Center.

Sid served on the board of directors of the Pima Community College Foundation, Outward Bound International, Rotary Club of Tucson and numerous other organizations. In 2001, he was named Tucson’s Philanthropist of the Year in recognition of his generosity and commitment to many charitable causes in our community.

Sid’s generosity has left a lasting legacy at the Steele Center. As children and their families enter The Arizona Elks Clinic for Children and Young Adults, they are greeted by Zoo Babies—beautiful photographs of baby animals from the Morse family collection—that never fail to bring enjoyment and a smile to the faces of children and adults alike.

– Susan Mannion, Fathers Day Council, Tucson

Steele Center Researchers Discover Protein Plays Role in Sickle Cell Anemia and Other Blood Diseases

Steele Center researchers Murray Brilliant, PhD, Lindholm Professor of Mammalian Genetics, and Driti Cohen-Barak, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, have discovered that the protein Sox6 is responsible for silencing—or turning off—epsilon globin—the embryonic form of beta-globin in hemoglobin. The researchers believe that if epsilon globin can be “re-expressed” (turned back on), it can limit the harmful effects of sickle cell anemia and beta-thalassemia, hereditary blood diseases that affect about 7 percent of the population (primarily African Americans).

Dr. Brilliant was the senior author of the study, “Sox6 Directly Silences Epsilon Globin Expression in Definitive Erythropoiesis,” which recently was published in the peer-reviewed journal PLoS Genetics (available at www.plosgenetics.org).

“Based on this discovery, we have now laid the foundation to begin exploring ways to develop new therapies for sickle cell anemia,” Dr. Brilliant says.

Hemoglobin is the protein in red blood cells responsible for transporting oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Normal red blood cells move easily through the blood vessels to deliver oxygen.

In sickle cell anemia, genetic mutations in adult beta globin cause the hemoglobin molecules to stick together in long, rigid rods after they release oxygen. These rods cause the red blood cells to become hard and sickle-shaped. When these sickle-shaped red blood cells go through small blood vessels, they clog the flow, depriving the body’s cells of blood and oxygen. Side effects include anemia (low blood count) pain episodes, strokes, eye and bone damage.

Hemoglobin consists of “alpha globins” and “beta globins.” During development from embryo to adult, beta-globins undergo “beta-globin gene switching”—the transition from embryonic to fetal to adult forms of beta-globin. This transition results in hemoglobins with a different affinity for oxygen. Since sickle cell anemia and beta-thalassemia result from mutations in the adult beta-globin, providing small amounts of normal embryonic or fetal beta-globins can alleviate some of the detrimental effects of the abnormal adult globins, as is found in sickle cell anemia.

This is currently accomplished through a chemotherapeutic approach that uses the drug hydroxyurea. “This chemical causes re-expression of earlier forms of globin that have been turned off in the adult, providing needed relief,” says Dr. Brilliant. “But there is a price using hydroxyurea,” he says, “Sometimes hydroxyurea works well, but oftentimes there are many negative side effects.

“What we’ve discovered is a genetic ‘switch’ to turn the embryonic form of beta-globin back on by turning the Sox6 protein off. So, we’ve revealed a novel and key component of the switch. By tweaking that switch, we’ll be able to at least partially replace the damaged adult beta globin that sickle cell anemia individuals suffer from,” he says.
Thank You to Our Volunteer Groups!

The Steele Center is grateful to its wonderful volunteer groups, who devote countless hours to raise funds for vital research and other projects at the Steele Center. Your support makes our work possible.

Proceeds from the Active Women’s 20-30 Club “Red Carpet” Event will fund Dr. Tracey Kurtzman’s “Ready.Set.SmartStart!” program to prevent obesity in Tucson children through an after-school program designed to change attitudes and behaviors in participating families.

Proceeds from the Arizona Elks Major Projects continue to support the “Arizona Elks Endowed Chair in Neonatology.” The Elks have also donated thousands of toys to the Arizona Elks Clinic for Children and Young Adults.

Students from Desert Christian Middle School held the third annual walkathon to raise money for pediatric cancer research.

Father’s Day Council Tucson “Fathers of the Year Awards Dinner and Gala” was a fabulous dinner, silent and live auctions to honor six outstanding Tucson fathers. All proceeds raised from this annual event fund type 1 diabetes research projects.

Funds raised from the Annual PANDA (People Acting Now Discover Answers) “Children Helping Children” fashion show will enable the Steele Center to create the “PANDA Children’s Aerodigestive Disorders Center,” to treat children suffering from eosinophilic esophagitis (EE), and eosinophilic gastroenteritis (EG), painful disorders of the digestive tract that have been increasing at alarming rates in Arizona.

Raise A Racquet for Kids had its most successful year ever! Funds from this annual tennis tournament support pediatric cancer research—specifically the CRCL cancer vaccine research and 17-DMAG—a potentially a less toxic therapeutic approach to cancer.

The Sara Courtney Memorial Walk/Run had a great turn out this year, and proceeds will fund ongoing type 1 diabetes research.

The Tee Up For Tots Golf Tournament had another successful year raising money to continue to fund its benefit, the Sara Courtney.”

Letter from 2006 Tucson Man of the Year, Dave Sittin

It has been my privilege to be associated with the Steele Children’s Research Center for nearly a decade. I learned about the Steele Center through my participation in the annual Fathers Day Council Fathers of the Year celebration, which raised money for juvenile diabetes research.

Another way I have been associated with the Steele Center is through “Tea Up For Tots (TUFTS), an organization that raises money for pediatric cancer research. The Zillman family—the founders of TUFTS—contacted me seven years ago about supporting their fight against neuroblastoma, the devastating cancer that took the life of their daughter, Courtney.

In 2000, Ginny Clements nominated me to be on the Steele Center Tucson Advisory Board. Since then, I’ve been directly involved with the Steele Center and have participated in many events to raise proceeds to further pediatric medical research.

As I became familiar with the juvenile diabetes program, my eyes were opened to the incredible world of research and care provided by the doctors and researchers at the Steele Center. My relationship with the Steele Center has grown, as is the case of most people who have come into contact with it.

These in the know realize that the Steele Center is at the forefront of all of the great campaigns against children’s diseases. The researchers are world class in every way.

The children who are in need of specialized treatments are particularly well served by the Steele Center. A tour of the center reveals the dedication of the physician-scientists, the patients and their parents who are committed to recovery.

All of the Steele Center’s results, both in the laboratory and at the bedside, are helping move the world toward a more disease-free, healthier generation of children.

Only a few entities located in Tucson can be regarded as world class. The Steele Children’s Research Center is one of those precious few.

New Faculty Join the Department of Pediatrics

The Department of Pediatrics welcomes the following new clinical and research faculty.

Heather Cahm, MD, Assistant Professor, Section of Neonatology

Kimberly Gerhart, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinical Pediatrics, Section of General Pediatrics

Matthew Gollub, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinical Pediatrics, Section of Critical Care

Ronald Grant, MD, Assistant Professor, Section of Hospital Medicine

Kurt Griffin, MD, Assistant Professor, Section of Endocrinology

Deborah Reisen, MD, Clinical Lecturer, Section of General Pediatrics

Eliza Holland, MD, Clinical Lecturer, Section of Hospital Medicine

Karthi Krishnan, MD, Assistant Professor, Section of Hematology/Oncology

Tracey Kurtzman, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinical Pediatrics, Section of General Pediatrics

Chan Law, Jr., MD, Assistant Professor, Clinical Pediatrics, Section of General Pediatrics

Faculty Highlights 2006

Cardiology

Richard Sonnenstein, MD, Professor, was selected as one of the “Best Doctors in America.”

Scott Klewer, MD, Associate Professor, was selected as one of the “Best Doctors in America.”

Scott Klewer, MD, Associate Professor, was selected as one of the “Best Doctors in America.”

Ricardo Samson, MD, Associate Professor, was lead author in the landmark study that was published in The New England Journal of Medicine, titled “Outcomes of Pediatric In-Hospital Ventricular Fibrillation.”

Critical Care

Robert A. Berg, MD, Professor, was senior author in the landmark study that was published in The New England Journal of Medicine, titled “Outcomes of Pediatric In-Hospital Ventricular Fibrillation.”

Marc Berg, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, was promoted to Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics. Dr. Berg was a co-author in the landmark study that was published in The New England Journal of Medicine, titled “Outcomes of Pediatric In-Hospital Ventricular Fibrillation.”

Juan Gutierrez, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, was promoted to Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics. Dr. Gutierrez was named one of “America’s Top Pediatricians” by the Consumers Research Council and is also selected as one of the “Best Doctors in America.”

Robyn Meyer, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, was promoted to Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics. She was lead author on the study titled, “Childhood drowning,” published in Pediatrics.

Andreas Theodorou, MD, Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, was selected as one of the “Best Doctors in America.” Dr. Theodorou organized the first AHSC “Interprofessional Communication Class,” a joint exercise for The University of Arizona Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Arizona State University College of Social Work. He also
William Garver, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, was promoted to Research Associate Professor.

Hematology/Oncology

Rechelle Bagatell, MD, Assistant Professor, was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. Dr. Bagatell was named Vice Chair of the Neuroblastoma Biology Committee, appointed to the Neuroblastoma Steering Committee and appointed chair of the High Risk Neuroblastoma Task Force of the Children’s Oncology Group. She also was awarded a five-year NIH grant—K23 Career Development Award for Patient-Oriented Research.

Emmanuel Katsanis, MD, Professor, Louise Thomas Endowed Chair in Pediatric Cancer Research, is senior author of the study, “Tumor-derived CD4(+)CD25 (+) regulatory T cell suppression of dendritic cell function involves TGF-beta and IL-10,” published in Cancer Immunology, Immunotherapy. He was also senior author of the study, “Perit朋友们对ntis排列 vaccinione with phosphoryl-cell lysate induces antiluxemia immunity,” published in Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation.

Infectious Disease

Sean P. Elliott, MD, Associate Professor, was co-author on a study published in Infection Diseases Clinic of North America, titled “Botulism: the many faces of botulinum toxin and its potential for bioterrorism.” Dr. Elliott was named “Clinical Science Educator of the Year.”

Neurology

Slava Dvorka, PhD, Research Associate Professor, was promoted to Research Professor with a joint promotion to the same rank in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy. He also received a five-year renewal of his NIH R01 grant titled, “Mechanisms of EGF-Mediated Reduction of Necrotizing Enterocolitis.” Dr. Dvorka and his research team published a study in the prestigious journal Gastroenterology titled, “Bile Acids Induce Ideal Damage During Experimental Necrotizing Enterocolitis.”

Melissa Halpem, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, received the Emde Foundation Award at the 2005 COTA National Research & Clinical Conference/Fourth Annual Advances in the Inflammatory Bowel Diseases in Miami. In addition, Dr. Halpem was also awarded a five-year renewal of her R01 grant titled, “Mechanisms of GDF-Mediated Reduction of Necrotizing Enterocolitis.” Dr. Dvorka and his research team published in the prestigious journal Gastroenterology titled, “Bile Acids Induce Ideal Damage During Experimental Necrotizing Enterocolitis.”

Pulmonary

Wayne Morgan, MD, Professor, was named “Basic Science Educator of the Year.”

University Center on Disabilities

John Meaney, PhD, Research Professor, received a $1.4 million, four-year cooperative agreement from the CDC to identify the number of children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities in Maricopa County.
Department of Pediatrics Faculty

Cardiology
Brent Barber, MD  Assistant Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Richard Donnerstein, MD  Professor

Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics
Hassan Hassan, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics

General Pediatrics
Michael Aldous, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Thomas Bahl, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Leslie Barton, MD  Professor

Endocrinology
Kurt Griffith, MD  Assistant Professor
Mark Wheeler, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics

Gastroenterology
Liqun Bai, MD  Research Assistant Professor
Fayez K. Ghishan, MD  Professor and Head

Ort Cohen-Barak, PhD  Research Assistant Professor
Christopher Cuniff, PhD  Professor
Robert Erickson, MD  Professor
Sherman Garver, PhD  Research Associate Professor
Randall Heidenreich, MD  Professor

Hematology/Oncology
Samita Andrenasay, PhD  Research Assistant Professor
Martin Andreassay, MD  Assistant Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Rochelle Bagatell, MD  Associate Professor
Michael Graham, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Kartik Krishnan, MD  Assistant Professor
Brenda Wittman, MD  Assistant Professor

Hospital Medicine/Oncology
Ronald S. Grant, MD  Clinical Lecturer
Cleo Hardin, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Sandra Herron, MD  Clinical Lecturer

Infectious Diseases
Sean Elliott, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics

Neonatology
Heather Cahen, MD  Assistant Professor

Nephrology
Mona Zawadeh, MD  Assistant Professor

Pharmacology/Toxicology
Leslie Boyer, MD  Associate Professor  Clinical Pediatrics

Pulmonary
Mark Brown, MD  Professor  Clinical Pediatrics
Fernando Martinez, MD  Professor
Wayne Morgan, MD  Professor

University Center on Disabilities (UCD)
Melinda Davis, PhD  Research Assistant Professor
John Meaney, PhD  Research Associate Professor

Phoenix Clerkship Program
Kipp Charlton, MD  Clinical Associate Professor  Maricopa Medical Center

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About the Cover: Career photos © Steele Center Tucson advisory board member Ginny Clemants and her darling granddaughter, Grace Catherine Clemants, 5½. Ginny has served on the Steele Center Board since 1997 and is a passionate advocate for children’s health issues.

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