The Children’s Postinfectious Autoimmune Encephalopathy Center of Excellence

The Children’s Postinfectious Autoimmune Encephalopathy (CPAE) Center of Excellence at the University of Arizona Steele Children’s Research Center provides clinical care, education, and utilizes research to better understand autoimmune encephalopathy. With your participation in our research registry and biospecimen research studies, you are contributing to this increased understanding.

We are pleased to share with you this “inside look” of the work of the CPAE Center and the progress that is being made. Your continuing support and involvement of the Center is greatly appreciated -- thank you!

Teaching & Training:

There are far too few physicians and behavioral health practitioners who know how to recognize and treat CPAE, PANDAS and PANS. At the UA CPAE Center of Excellence, we are intent on building the knowledge and skills of up-and-coming practitioners to create a deep pool of capable clinicians and researchers. Our team is proud to be serving as mentors to students from high school honors students through post-graduate level professionals. Here are profiles of a few of those we’ve partnered with and trained over the past year:

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) Fellows:

Last January, we were delighted to commence a 6-month required rotation for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) Fellows at our CPAE Center of Excellence. CAP Fellows are senior MD or DO post-graduates, typically in their 5th or 6th year of psychiatry residency training. Through the rotation, fellows develop first-hand expertise in the evaluation and treatment of PANS and PANDAS. Jana Spasovski, MD, is the first fellow to take part in this new rotation, and she made a major contribution to our educational aim through her presentation at the UA Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson Psychiatry Department Grand Rounds in March 2021. Dr. Spasovski delivered an outstanding presentation on the current state of research on CPAE to nearly 100 attendees from the Southern Arizona region.

Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics Fellows:

A Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician (DBP) is an expert in typical child development with the skills to identify developmental areas in which a child may need support. For children with a diagnosis of autism, cerebral palsy, ADHD or other disability, the DBP helps to support the child in the context of their family to achieve what they want in life. DBP Fellows at our UA/Banner CPAE Clinic are being trained to develop expertise in working with children with PANS/PANDAS and their families. Brittany Samson, MD, a DBP Fellow at our UA/Banner CPAE Clinic, is focusing on studying anxiety in the population of children with PANS/PANDAS. Her work with this population, and the work of others who will follow her, will move us forward in our understanding of the children and families we serve.
Health and Human Values Undergraduates: We also have forged a strong relationship with the Health and Human Values (HHV) program at the UA Arizona Honors College. HHV students learn about health and medicine through social sciences and humanities perspectives with an internship experience. The program provides students with a unique preparation for medical school admission and for professional success.

Nupur Fnu was our Spring 2021 CPAE Clinical Intern from the HHV program. She is majoring in Physiology and Medical Sciences with minors in Spanish and HHV. Her internship goal was to build knowledge on subjects like public health, physician-patient relationships, communication within medicine, sociology of medicine, and health care systems. She hopes to go on to medical school or a physician assistant program. Nupur’s goal is to work with underserved populations globally to provide medical care within the context of various social, political, cultural, and environmental aspects.

Avani Gandhi will be our Fall 2021 CPAE Clinical Intern. She is a UA Arizona junior Majoring in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science with a minor in HHV. Growing up in Chicago, Avani observed how the lack of resources negatively affected the health of people in her community- and how a surplus of those resources set surrounding communities up for success. Through participation in HHV, she has learned that these issues are not only prevalent in her hometown; they are common trends across the nation. Avani is passionate about learning how to make a more health-equitable society by helping low socioeconomic and historically marginalized communities improve their health and well-being.

RESEARCH STUDY: Experiences of Families with Children Affected by PANS/PANDAS
You are being invited to participate in a research study of the University of Connecticut entitled Experiences of Families with Children affected by PANS/PANDAS. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of families accessing adequate care, following the recommendations by clinicians, and getting their children healthy. It is a survey consisting of 64 questions that should take about 40-60 minutes to complete. We are asking you to participate to shed further light on the health care challenges faced by children with PANS/PANDAS and their families. Participation is voluntary and has no compensation. You can fill out the survey in a computer, tablet, or smart phone. The smart phone format takes a bit longer. If you want to read the consent form and participate in the study, please click on the following link: https://uconn.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3EtJFFzzKNpeyPQ

CHILD HEALTH CARE PROVIDER HANDOUTS:
One of our goals at the UA CPAE Center of Excellence is to ensure that all child health providers recognize the symptoms of PANS/PANDAS and know how to provide initial treatment. To further this goal, we’ve developed two brief handouts for physicians and other child health care providers. Click on these links to see the handouts Understanding PANS/PANDAS and Diagnosis and Treatment of PANS/PANDAS. Please feel free to share with everyone who could benefit from having this ready reference.

For questions or more information, please contact Linnette Ortiz or Virginia Ellis at: peds-cpae@email.arizona.edu