Division Spotlight: Pediatric Hematology/Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplantation

The Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplantation is made up of 9 Board certified physicians, and 4 Nurse Practitioners, who practice at UNMC and at CHMC. Division members see almost all children and young adults with cancer and blood diseases in our catchment area, and the BMT service provides service for children with recurrent or high risk cancer, marrow failure syndromes, immunodeficiency and metabolic disease in Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota. The Division utilizes a truly multidisciplinary approach to caring for these complicated patients, working with varied pediatric subspecialists, with child life, education support services, psychology, physical and occupational therapy, and pediatric dietetics.

Hem/Onc & BMT Faculty and Staff

Physicians:

- Bruce Gordon, MD; Professor, Division Chief; Executive Chairman, Institutional Review Boards
- Peter Coccia, MD; Ittner Professor of Pediatrics; Vice Chairperson, Department Pediatrics
- Minnie Abromowitch, MD; Professor
- Jill Beck, MD; Assistant Professor
- Don Coulter, MD; Associate Professor
- James Ford; Assistant Professor
- James Harper, MD; Associate Professor; Director of Continuing Medical Education-Children's Hospital & Medical Center
- Christina Lettieri, MD; Assistant Professor
- Stefanie Lowas, MD; Assistant Professor
- Harold Maurer, MD; Professor
- Phyllis Warkentin, MD; Professor

Research Faculty

- Sutapa Ray, PhD; Assistant Professor

Nurse Practitioners

- Amanda Arens, MSN, APRN, CPNP; Inpatient Nurse Practitioner
- Rebecca Swanson, MSN, APRN, CPNP; Outpatient Nurse Practitioner
Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program

The Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program was started at UNMC in September 1987 by physicians who still have a strong presence on campus today: husband and wife duo Drs. Peter Coccia and Phyllis Warkentin along with our current Division Chief and Transplanter, Dr. Bruce Gordon. Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant is unique to UNMC, as other local hospitals care for general oncology and hematology patients; we are the only center in Nebraska that can provide the specialized treatments for transplant.

Our program offers both autologous (where the patient is their own donor) and allogeneic (where the patient receives stem cells from another individual) stem cell transplants to patients suffering from both malignant and hematologic diseases. It will be expanding to provide curative treatment options to patients suffering from Sickle Cell Disease and other life-threatening immunodeficiencies.

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Sachit Patel, a trained pediatric bone marrow transplant physician, will be joining the team in July, 2016. He will bring additional expertise in umbilical cord blood transplant and use of alternative donor sources. Additionally, our team consists of transplant physician Dr. Don Coulter, both inpatient and outpatient Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, and an RN transplant nurse coordinator. Patients undergoing stem cell transplant receive care from trained nurses and multi-disciplinary staff that are specialized in caring for this unique patient population.

In the past two years, we have completed 32 pediatric bone marrow transplants with children ranging from ages 3 months to 19 years old. These transplants have consisted of a vast array of donor sources,
including bone marrow, peripheral blood stem cells and umbilical cord blood. We have effectively harvested and performed transplant with 5 matched sibling donors. In the case of matched sibling donor transplant, each sibling has a 25% chance to be a match to the child. Anyone can visit The National Marrow Donor Program site at www.nmdp.org to register to become a donor.

Pediatric Hem/Onc Clinical Trials Office

The clinical trials office provides a variety of services for the pediatric and adult oncology and hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) service lines. The staff of four employees can be divided into two groups, cooperative group research and unrelated stem cell donor search and product procurement. A team of two employees coordinate the primary tasks for each group. A supervisor oversees operations and training, as well as billing, reimbursement, and contracts for all services.

The cooperative group research team manages all Children's Oncology Group clinical trial activities, from regulatory affairs to subject registration and data submission to specimen retrieval and send out. Approximately 30-40 clinical trials are open for accrual at any given time and another 20 studies in follow-up status, requiring administrative tasks such as data and specimen submission. Children's Oncology Group develops variety studies - therapeutic, biology/pathologic, and supportive care - covering many different diseases- leukemia, lymphoma, neuroblastoma, and sarcoma, to name a few.

The unrelated donor stem cell transplant team is responsible for all search and procurement activities for patients who need a stem cell transplant, but do not have a suitable match within their family. Successful search coordination requires knowledge of Human Leukocyte Antigen compatibility and unrelated stem cell donor standards set by the TNMC HSCT program, the FDA, and the discipline's broader community of clinicians and researchers. This dynamic process is an international endeavor in which coordinators are engaged even beyond the product delivery, submitting recipients' transplant data to local and national databases as well as having a key role in coordinating stem cell transplant clinical trials. In addition, this team coordinates the work up and collection of unrelated donors who have been chosen to donate cells for patients in need of a donor throughout the world.

Each staff member has an important role in patient care and research, requiring extensive training and certifications including human subjects protection and transport of hazardous materials. The section also supports staff members who pursue coordinator certifications offered through national clinical research associations. Currently, two staff members are certified in clinical research coordination.

Pediatric Cancer Research Group

The Pediatric Cancer Research Group has utilized state and foundation funding to build a multi-disciplinary team completing basic, translational and population science investigations. Specifically the team includes collaboration with the UNMC College of Public Health, College of Pharmacy, and Fred and Pamela Buffett Cancer Center; Children's Hospital & Medical Center, Nebraska Medicine and the University of Nebraska Omaha. Current multidisciplinary investigations include the evaluation of novel therapeutics in pediatric solid tumors, evaluation of new biomarkers of neuroblastoma and mapping of locations of chronic childhood diseases in the state of Nebraska. In the past year four manuscripts have been published and more are currently in preparation. Two pediatric residents have rotated through the lab and received valuable translational research experience.
Peds Hem/Onc Community Service

The Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology & BMT plays a major role in the lives of many children across our nation. Because of the significant impact that we have on our patients, we take pride in participating and leading special events that positively affect our patients. Two major events we sponsor annually include the St. Baldrick’s fundraiser and Camp CoHoLo.

St Baldrick’s is an annual head-shaving event held to raise funds for pediatric cancer research and our department has proudly sponsored this event. Many people from around the region, both old and young, have participated in shaving their heads for pediatric cancer! Under the leadership of Amanda Arens, RN, MSN, CPNP, over $9,000 was raised in 2014 and over $7500 in 2015. On July 22, 2016 we will host our 10th event, and it is a fantastic way to promote pediatric cancer research and awareness! It is also a fun way to kick off Camp CoHoLo.

Camp CoHoLo serves children between the ages of 6 to 17 that are personally impacted by cancer or blood disorders. It gives patients with specific medical needs an opportunity to participate in a summer camp experience. UNMC and Children's Hospital Pediatric Hematology/Oncology doctors, nurses, residents and medical students team up to staff this fun and exciting event for our pediatric patients. Don Coulter, MD is the medical director of this event.

Hem/Onc & BMT Patient Care Services

Outpatient Clinic Locations

- UNMC Lied Transplant Center, 3rd Floor; M-F 8:30 am to 4:00 pm; 402/559-7257
- Children's Specialty Pediatric Center; M-F 8:30 am to 4:00 pm; 402/955-3950

Resident Faculty Awards

The Pediatric Residency Program would like to honor select faculty members for their dedication to the residency program and taking the additional time to teach residents. On a monthly basis residents vote for one community and one academic faculty member who they felt went above and beyond expectations to improve their education.

January 2016 recipients are:

Adam Reinhardt, M.D.
Academic Faculty Award

Wesley Meyer, D.O.
Community Faculty Award

Congratulations and thank you for your commitment to our program and bettering the future physicians of our community.