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Contacts: Beth Kleineman
630-315-2966

Beth@hensonconsulting.com

Erica Stimac
630-315-2961

Erica@hensonconsulting.com

THE CHILDREN'S HEART FOUNDATION REACHES KEY FUNDING MILESTONE

Foundation Contributes More Than \$3 Million to Ground-Breaking Congenital Heart Defect Research and Continues to Seek Proposals for New Research in 2008

LINCONSHIRE, Ill. – April 2008 – The Children's Heart Foundation today announced that it met a significant funding milestone, contributing an astounding \$3 million toward 34 revolutionary congenital heart defect (CHD) research studies since its establishment in 1996.

As the country's leading organization solely committed to CHD funding, The Children's Heart Foundation dedicates itself to bringing health, hope and happiness to children and families impacted by a CHD through many efforts, but most notably, through research support.

In an effort to continue funding prominent research, The Children's Heart Foundation is calling upon all clinical investigators to submit research proposals on congenital heart disease no later than June 6, 2008. The Medical Advisory Board of The Children's Heart Foundation – made up of 31 of the nation's leading doctors in the fields of cardiology, pediatrics and cardio-thoracic surgery – will review the proposals and recommend studies that are best suited for its contributions. Those that are chosen will receive funding in December 2008.

Most people are unaware that CHDs are the most common birth defect in America, affecting approximately one in one hundred, or 40,000 newborns each year. CHDs are responsible for one third of all birth defect-related deaths and sadly 20 percent - or 8,000 children in the United States alone - who make it through birth will not survive past their first birthday. Although a child is born every 15 minutes with a CHD, research continues to be grossly under-funded in America. Of every dollar the government spends on medical funding, only a fraction of a penny is directed toward congenital heart defect research.

“The Children's Heart Foundation is comprised of parents, family members and friends of those affected by a congenital heart defect working together to raise awareness of CHDs and identify new treatments,” says Bill Foley, Executive Director, The Children's Heart Foundation. “The Foundation supports and provides funding for congenital heart disease that benefits those living, and those yet to be born, with this condition. We are very selective in the research we choose to fund and want to be sure that we're covering all areas from diagnostics and treatments, to medical devices and safety issues.”

To submit research proposals, clinical Investigators should contact The Children's Heart Foundation at http://www.childrensheartfoundation.org/call_proposals08.htm.

Recently Funded Studies

The goal of The Children's Heart Foundation is to fund the most promising research projects each year in a variety of categories whether they be basic science or surgical-based. The Foundation provides cross-categorical representation and works with some of the most renowned specialists in cardiology and cardio thoracic surgery. In 2007 The Children's Heart Foundation funded more than \$600,000 in research, and is eagerly anticipating results from three recently funded studies in particular that address the genetic causes of CHDs, methods of protecting against brain injury during infant heart surgery and medical errors in American hospitals in relation to CHD treatment in infants. Preliminary results for all studies will be available in the Fall of 2008.

“Genetics of Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome”

Principle Investigator: Dr. Vidu Garg, Departments of Pediatrics and Molecular Biology, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center

Amount Funded: \$93,200

The cause for the majority of cardiac birth defects remains unknown; however, recent evidence suggests that genetic predispositions may somehow be involved. Because identifications of novel genetic etiologies is limited – since severe heart defects are often lethal in childhood – this study will investigate genetic causes of congenital heart disease in humans using a new technology that can detect small abnormalities within a person's entire genetic make-up. Specifically, the study will look at the condition, hypoplastic left heart syndrome, which occurs when the left ventricle fails to develop properly. Researchers hypothesize that children with HLHS have chromosomal abnormalities that are not detectable by traditional genetic testing.

(Additional funding support provided by The Blowitz – Ridgeway Foundation of Schaumburg, IL)

“Preconditioning Against Periventricular Leukomalacia Associated with Neonatal Cardiac Surgery”

Principle Investigators: Dr. Glen Van Arsdell, Dr. Edward Hickey, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario

Amount Funded: \$43,611

Brain surgery is surprisingly common following the surgical repair of congenital heart disease in infancy. Surgery may result in brain injury, which can affect movement and in some rare cases, cause cerebral palsy (muscular in-coordination and speech disturbances) and coma. Therefore, there is a considerable interest in developing methods of protecting against brain injury during infant heart surgery. This study will look at preconditioning, an experimental technique that provides tolerance against brain injury by protecting against oxygen loss and inflammation in the brain.

“Human Factors and Patient Safety During Congenital heart Surgery”

Principle Investigator: Dr. Emile Bacha, Children's Hospital Boston; Cardiac Surgery Department

Amount Funded: \$39,750

This study is designed to identify human factors that are a threat to the safety of infants with congenital heart disease. Its purpose is to identify the occurrence and types of human factors in the operating room (i.e. organizational dynamics, team performance, etc.) that can potentially lead to undesirable outcomes such as adverse events and hospital death. Results from this study will lead to redesign of training programs for operating room teams to enhance skills that may influence surgical outcomes.

For information on how to donate to The Children's Heart Foundation, or to donate online, please visit www.childrensheartfoundation.org. In addition, attending a Children's Heart Foundation event is a great way to participate in the fight against congenital heart defects. A complete events calendar for all chapter locations can be found on The Children's Heart Foundation Web site.

About The Children's Heart Foundation

Based in Lincolnshire, Illinois, The Children's Heart Foundation is the country's leading organization committed to funding research to help find better treatments – and hopefully someday a cure – for children born with congenital heart defects. To date, The Children's Heart Foundation has funded over \$3 million towards 34 research projects led by the nation's best and most promising research teams – several of which have gone on to receive funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the American Heart Association (AHA). The Children's Heart Foundation is the only organization created solely to fund congenital heart defect research. There are currently six chapters nationwide, and reach continues to expand. The Foundation is not affiliated with any one medical institution or organization, which ensures that the most promising congenital heart defect research continues to get funded anywhere in the world .

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