



## Partnership between medical school and private specialty practice benefits Nevadans

The collaborative relationship between the University of Nevada School of Medicine and the Children’s Heart Center of Nevada illustrates the successful marriage of public and private entities working together to address Nevada’s healthcare needs.

“It is a unique relationship that is not well known,” said Dr. William Evans, the pediatric cardiologist who founded Children’s Heart Center in 1980. “We are both working together to better healthcare in Nevada.” The Center has offices in Las Vegas, Henderson, Reno and Carson City, and also conduct outreach clinics throughout the state.

Evans said his practice offers a strong belief in the academic principles of research for the advancement of scientific knowledge and the teaching of physicians and service to the community—all ideals that fit hand-in-glove with the School of Medicine’s mission as the only public medical school in the state dedicated to a best-practice approach to medicine.

For more than 10 years, the 12 cardiologists of the Children’s Heart Center have served as the Department of Pediatrics’ cardiology division and provide training to all 36 residents during their training both as a required rotation and by performing consultations on their

*Pediatric resident Dr. Paul Do, Dr. Gary Mayman (seated) and Dr. William Evans of the Children’s Heart Center of Nevada review a child’s echocardiogram in their Las Vegas office.*

patients while they rotate on other services such as the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and inpatient ward. The residents have the opportunity to become involved in the Heart Center’s research projects and are enthusiastically welcomed.

“Children’s Heart Center is a very integral and important part of the school’s pediatrics teaching program,” said Dr. David Gremse, chair of the school’s pediatric department in Las Vegas. “The teaching they provide contributes to the success of our residents. They are excellent role models for our residents and have high quality medical care and dedication to research.”

One former School of Medicine pediatric resident even went on to success at the Children’s Heart Center itself: Dr. Robert Rollins,

whose interest is fetal cardiology, joined the staff in 2006.

Gremse adds that the Children's Heart Center's research component, a robust part of the practice in terms of the quantity and quality of published papers and clinical trials, contributes to the medical school in terms of scholarly activities that are funded through the practice.

Children's Heart Center research activities include studies in areas of pediatric cardiovascular health such as inflammatory markers, study and control of risk factors for cardiac diseases, physical fitness, cardiac rehabilitation, fetal cardiology, and interventional cardiology.

Evans said the relationship between his practice and the School of Medicine provides subspecialty care and academic output recognition for the state and the school. "We exemplify the result of the school's search for ways to ally their academic goals by partnering with private entities in the state," Evans said.

### Center treats teen obesity

Another area of collaboration between the medical school and Children's Heart Center is in the field of adolescent obesity.

"We've partnered together to address this number one preventable health issue in Nevada," said Dr. James Lau, the School of Medicine's bariatric division chief in the Department of Surgery.

*Anne McMillin, APR, is a public relations specialist for health science communications for the School of Medicine.*

The School of Medicine and Children's Heart Center are taking on this sensitive and sometimes controversial issue with all the rigor of true caring professionals. The new partnership centers on collaboratively finding the best methodology to treat adolescent obesity with nonsurgical means at the Children's Heart Center, while carefully evaluating eligible candidates for surgical suitability through the School of Medicine. The partnership follows the consensus criteria

for adolescent weight loss surgery at the national level led by Dr. Thomas Inge, a highly respected bariatric surgeon, who assembled a committee that developed specific guidelines for patient eligibility related to adolescent bariatric surgery.

The process for addressing obesity in adolescents is based on this national model and involves the complete psychological, emotional, spiritual and physical evaluation of the patient, as well as consideration of family dynamics, to measure the candidate's opportunity for weight-loss success. A pediatric endocrinologist, gastroenterologist, a specialist in adolescent medicine, nutritionist, psychiatrist, pediatric surgeon, a local pastor and a member of a childhood obesity prevention organization all make up this collaborative evaluation team between the center and the medical school.

Patients typically enter a 12-week medically supervised program at the Children's Heart Center to help them lose weight. Upon completion of that program, they are evaluated and screened for candidacy for bariatric surgery through Lau's division.

"Together we evaluate potential patients to see if they are physically and emotionally mature enough to benefit from bariatric surgery," said Lau, who looks for significant comorbidity conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, liver damage and hypertension in these 16- to 17-year-old patients when evaluating them for bariatric surgery.

The Children's Heart Center is providing a family instructional manual as part of the 12-week program for Project HOPE, or Healthy Options for Prevention and Education, the educational component of the School of Medicine's bariatric division. Project HOPE aims to



*Dr. William Evans makes a point during a weekly cardiac catheterization conference.*

help reduce childhood obesity through early outreach efforts. These prevention measures focus on educating children and their families about how to improve their daily eating and physical activity habits. By using this easy-to-read, comprehensive manual, children learn about healthful nutrition and fitness guidelines that can be used at home. Patricia Lau, program administrator for the medical school's bariatric division, plans to distribute the manual to each child at Roy Martin Middle School in Las Vegas this fall. The center also provides guidelines for purchasing pedometers that will be used in the bariatric division's walking program to encourage adolescents to increase their physical activity.

Dr. William Zamboni, chair of the School of Medicine's department of surgery, considers the Children's Heart Center as an area of excellence within the medical school. "They provide state-of-the-art care to Nevada residents and are actively involved in research and teaching, which is critical to the mission of the school. In particular, the Department of Surgery and its Division of Bariatric Surgery are excited about collaborating to develop the adolescent obesity program."

In all areas of collaboration, the School of Medicine's decade-long partnership with the Children's Heart Center combines the strength of two of the state's medical powerhouses to tackle critical healthcare issues in Nevada. 