DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The UAB Center for Metabolic Bone Disease (CMBD) currently has an RFA for pilot and feasibility projects. Applications are due on Monday, January 25, 2010. The general focus is on bone biology and disease. Both basic and translational research applications are encouraged.

The 2010 International Conference on the Chemistry and Biology of Mineralized Tissues is scheduled for November 7-12, 2010 and will be held at the Carefree Resort in Carefree, Arizona. One of our CMBD members, Mary MacDougall, PhD, Associate Dean for Research, School of Dentistry, and Director, Institute of Oral Health Research, is on the Organizing Committee for this conference. Please contact Dr. MacDougall’s office at 205-996-5122 if you are interested in obtaining more information about this conference.

A scientific symposium focused on bone biology and disease will be hosted by the CMBD on Wednesday, March 31, 2010, followed by an external review of the Center. The symposium speakers are: Laurie K. McCauley, DDS, PhD, University of Michigan; Carlos M. Isales, MD, Medical College of Georgia; Janet Rubin, MD, University of North Carolina; and Steven Teitelbaum, MD, Washington University School of Medicine. More detailed information will follow later.

Below is an overview of the newly formed UAB Bone Dysplasia and Connective Tissue Disorder Clinic directed by Maria Descartes, M.D., Associate Professor, Department of Genetics.

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UAB OPENS FIRST SPECIALTY CLINIC IN STATE FOR BONE DYSPLASIA AND CONNECTIVE TISSUE DISORDERS

With a grant from Health Services Foundation General Endowment Fund, UAB opened the state’s first full service clinic for patients with skeletal dysplasias and related disorders throughout their lifespan including prenatally. This clinic provides diagnosis, management, and follow up care for infants, adolescents and adults.

The Bone Dysplasia and Connective Tissue Disorder Clinic for Adults and Children (http://www.genetics.uab.edu/bonedysplasiaClinic.html) will be a multidisciplinary clinic housed within the Department of Genetics (http://www.genetics.uab.edu). Initially, the clinic will meet twice a month in the Kaul Building. Appointments are accepted from referring physicians or directly from patients.

Bone dysplasias are a related group of disorders that affect bone and cartilage resulting in abnormal growth and development of the skeleton. Their etiology is complex and heterogeneous. Most of these disorders result in disproportionate short stature and other bone deformities that often impact other body systems. Affected individuals have a variety of medical and social concerns that cannot be adequately addressed by a single visit with a primary care provider and/or specialist. Connective tissue conditions are a more diverse group of conditions affecting the amount and function of proteins that support and form organs and tissues in the body. These disorders may be inherited, such as Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, or be part of another genetic syndrome, such as lysosomal storage disorders.

The overall incidence of skeletal dysplasias is approximately 1 per 4,000 births. However, the true incidence may be twice as high because many symptoms do not manifest until childhood or even later, when short stature, joint symptoms, and other complications arise. The prevalence of heritable disorders of connective tissue us approximately 1 in 272 in the USA. As a group these conditions are not rare. With the estimated current population of Alabama being 4,600,000 a conservative estimate of the potential base for this clinic would be above 25,000.

Recognizing the extent of the need of both experts and coordinated care for patient’s skeletal dysplasia and connective tissue conditions is why we decided to combine resources here at UAB to create a clinic that will be the first of its nature in the Southeast, United States. This clinic will focus on providing comprehensive care including education, research and coordination of care. We are working with numerous specialists in the UAB system to provide comprehensive care.

If you are interested in learning more about this clinic, or would like to refer a patient please call 205-934-9527 or email bonedysplasia@genetics.uab.edu.

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