

HEROES

THE MAGAZINE OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL NEW ORLEANS | SPRING 2022



World-class care
for cancer and
blood disorders



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Foreword

HEROES

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Editor

Kristen Robinson

Associate Editor

Marykay Thevis

Photographers

Frank Aymami
Justen Williams

Contributing Writers

Kelley Adamec
Lynnsey Belsome
Leslie Cardè
Shaina Grace
Cathleen Randon
Kristen Robinson
Marykay Thevis

Editorial Board

Kelley Adamec
Director of Annual Giving

Jonathan Brouk
Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer,
& Chief Strategy Officer

Lindsey Casey, RN
Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer

Robert Gassiot
Creative Director, LCMC Health

Cathleen Randon
Development Officer

Natasha Richardson
Vice President, Academic Affiliations
& Community Programs

Kristen Robinson
Senior Director, Marketing
& Institutional Advancement

Marykay Thevis
Communications Manager

John R. Nickens IV
President & Chief Executive Officer

Mark W. Kline, MD
Physician-in-Chief & Chief Medical Officer

200 Henry Clay Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70118
chnola.org
504.899.9511



Children's Hospital
New Orleans
LCMC Health

JOHN R. NICKENS IV, PRESIDENT & CEO



Welcoming 2022 – A year of transformative growth

Dear friends and supporters,

During the first months of 2022, there was much to celebrate at Children's Hospital New Orleans! This issue of *Heroes Magazine* highlights these truly extraordinary accomplishments – successes that will allow us to continue to transform pediatric healthcare for the next generation.

At the top of the list is our nursing Magnet designation. More than four years in the making, Magnet recognition provides our community with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of patient care, and Children's Hospital is proud to be among the nation's top eight percent of hospitals to achieve the prestigious designation. This is coupled with our recent ranking among *Newsweek's* World's Best Hospital's for Pediatrics.



In March, we celebrated Children's Hospital's 40th annual Sugarplum Ball, raising a record-breaking \$1 million. Thanks to our generous sponsors and patrons, support of Sugarplum Ball helps expand vital programs and services, advance technology, innovate care delivery, and fund lifesaving projects. This year was nothing short of extraordinary – thanks to you!

Programmatically, we have seen tremendous growth at the hospital, and in our outpatient clinics. With an unyielding focus on excellence, we are caring for more inpatients than ever before, performing more surgeries, and transporting more patients to receive the highly specialized care they need – backed by the expert team of pediatric-trained providers found only at Children's Hospital New Orleans.

Together with our academic partners at LSU Health New Orleans and Tulane University School of Medicine, we remain inspired by our shared vision to improve the health of the next generation – and we could not do it alone. Your support makes a healthier tomorrow possible.

With gratitude,

John R. Nickens IV
President & Chief Executive Officer
Children's Hospital New Orleans



Children's Hospital earns national recognition in pediatric medicine

Of the many hallmarks of a quality hospital, awards and recognitions are one way that top hospitals like Children's Hospital New Orleans stand out among their peers. This year, Children's Hospital and its expert providers were honored to be recognized for excellence in research, patient safety, and organizational operations.

Newsweek's Best Specialty Hospitals in the World for Pediatrics

In October 2021, Children's Hospital was named, for the very first time, to *Newsweek's* roster of 'Best Specialty Hospitals in the World for Pediatrics'. In the 2022 rankings, Children's Hospital New Orleans was the only children's hospital in Louisiana or Mississippi to be recognized. This first-ever ranking reflects the hospital's unwavering commitment to provide the best possible care to all kids, and only kids, in Louisiana and the Gulf South.

Solutions for Patient Safety Hospital of the Month

Children's Hospital is a proud member of Children's Hospitals' Solutions for Patient Safety (SPS), a collaborative of more than 145 children's hospitals that work together toward the common goal of eliminating serious harm in hospitals. In January 2022, Children's Hospital New Orleans was recognized for exemplary work in patient safety and quality and was named SPS Hospital of the Month.

Five Children's Hospital physicians rank among the top two percent of cited researchers worldwide

Five Children's Hospital physicians were recognized among the most-cited scientists worldwide by Stanford University. "The World's Top 2% Scientists" is an annual list compiled by experts from Stanford University that examines more than 8 million scientists worldwide. The top two percent list is made up of 160,000 scientists in 22 scientific fields and 176 subfields.

Children's Hospital physician researchers named to the list were Drs. Mary Brandt, Mark Kline, Jay Kolls, Charles Zeanah, and George Bisset. In addition,



Dr. George Bisset



Dr. Mary Brandt



Dr. Mark Kline



Dr. Jay Kolls



Dr. Charles Zeanah

Dr. Mark Kline and Dr. Mary Brandt ranked among the top one percent of 63,988 pediatric researchers worldwide.

Children's Hospital receives Joint Commission Re-Accreditation

Once every three years, The Joint Commission, the global leader for healthcare accreditation, visits hospitals to conduct an onsite survey to assess compliance with standards and to verify performance improvement strategies. In October 2021, the Joint Commission surveyors arrived at Children's Hospital and spent four days visiting areas throughout the hospital and clinics, meeting with team members, and reviewing thousands of performance standards, conditions of participation, and compliance with national patient safety goals. The survey team collectively represented 18 days of surveying throughout the organization. In December 2021, The Joint Commission renewed Children's Hospital's three-year accreditation.

Julie George named new Board of Trustees Chair



Julie Livaudais George was named Chair of the Board of Trustees for Children's Hospital New Orleans in March 2022. Julie first joined the Children's Hospital Board of Trustees in 1997 and has served on the Legal and Insurance, Community Benefits, Governance, Executive, Development, Finance, and Patient Safety and Quality committees during her tenure on the board. Julie is the Firm Managing Partner and Practice Area Coordinator for the Labor and Employment practice at Chaffe McCall. She represents corporate clients ranging from local businesses to multinational corporations, as well as educational institutions and area nonprofit organizations.

Julie has been honored among the Women of the Year by *New Orleans CityBusiness*, named as a Top Lawyer in Labor and Employment Law by *New Orleans Magazine*, selected as one of *St. Charles Avenue* magazine's previous Activists of the Year, and was recognized among Leadership in Law by *New Orleans CityBusiness*, just to name a few of her honors and awards. Additionally, Julie served as Co-Chair of Children's Hospital's Sugarplum Ball in 2020 and was selected as the Junior League of New Orleans' Sustainer of the Year in 2011. Julie has served the New Orleans community in a wide variety of volunteer, board, and leadership roles for decades, and will bring passion and expertise to her role as Children's Hospital's Board Chair.

Children's Hospital among nation's top eight percent of hospitals to achieve the prestigious nursing Magnet® Recognition

In May 2021, Children's Hospital New Orleans officially submitted its application to the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) for the prestigious Magnet Recognition Program®. Magnet hospitals are certified by the ANCC as institutions where nurses are empowered to not only take the lead on patient care but to be the drivers of institutional healthcare change and innovation.

After submitting the Magnet document to the ANCC on May 28, 2021, Children's Hospital was granted a Magnet virtual site visit from December 9-10. Following the rigorous visit, the appraisers sent their report from the Magnet document and notes from the onsite survey to the Commission on Magnet.

In early 2022, Children's Hospital received the much-anticipated call from the Commission on Magnet. A room full of administrators, nurses, and hospital staff listened in on the virtual meeting as nurses on units across the hospital and in offsite clinics live streamed the exciting moment.

With cheers of celebration and music from a second line band, Children's Hospital was designated a Magnet hospital. With this designation, Children's Hospital joins the global community of Magnet-recognized organizations. Just a small, select group of U.S. healthcare organizations have achieved Magnet recognition, which requires a rigorous and lengthy



application and review process with broad participation from across the organization. In addition to achieving Magnet designation, Children's Hospital received five exemplars in the Magnet Model competency of exemplary professional practice.

"Magnet recognition provides our community with the ultimate benchmark

to measure the quality of patient care," said Lindsey Casey, Chief Nursing Officer, Children's Hospital. "Achieving Magnet recognition reinforces the culture of excellence that is a cornerstone of how we serve our community, and represents our nurses' commitment to providing the very best care to the children of Louisiana and the Gulf South."

CHNOLA Nurses by the numbers

As Louisiana's first and largest freestanding children's hospital, Children's Hospital New Orleans employs more than 800 nurses who support 93 different departments. More than 61 percent of Children's Hospital nurses hold specialty certifications, and more than 80 percent hold a BSN or greater. The Children's nursing team advances excellence in nursing practice every day and demonstrates professional growth through transformational leadership, structural empowerment, exemplary professional practice, new knowledge, innovations, and continuous improvements.



Children's Hospital opens Trauma and Grief Center

Last fall, Children's Hospital New Orleans announced the opening of its first Trauma and Grief (TAG) Center within the hospital's Behavioral Health service line. At the helm of the program is Executive Director Julie Kaplow, PhD, ABPP, Children's Hospital's expert in childhood trauma and bereavement. Under Dr. Kaplow's guidance, Children's Hospital provides proven resources for treating kids facing trauma and bereavement, while expanding specialized mental and behavioral health services for children and adolescents across Louisiana.

With the inception of the Trauma and Grief Center, Children's Hospital became home to one of the only outpatient facilities in Louisiana to focus exclusively on addressing trauma and grief in youth – a service our community desperately needs especially after recent traumatic events that have affected families and children in our own community.



"I am thrilled to join the team at Children's Hospital to establish a new TAG Center in New Orleans, particularly given the number of traumas and losses that youth here are facing, including Hurricane Ida, the high rates of COVID-19 deaths, and ongoing community violence," said Dr. Kaplow. "Identifying and addressing trauma and grief as early as possible is crucial to helping kids lead healthy, happy lives, and promoting resiliency over the longer term."

To ensure access to best practice trauma- and grief-informed mental health care, the Trauma and Grief Center at Children's Hospital is focused on community outreach initiatives, like partnering with Children's Hospital's ThriveKids school-based wellness initiatives, and the High 5 Project, a program started by Children's that aims to ensure that all children with mental and behavioral disorders receive the care and support they need to thrive.

Children’s Hospital partners with The 15 White Coats to inspire future minority careers in medicine



Children’s Hospital New Orleans and The 15 White Coats formalized a partnership early in 2022 where the two organizations are working together to bring the inspiring mission of The 15 White Coats into the classroom, sharing stories of strength and resilience while educating minority students about careers in medicine.

Through the partnership, Children’s Hospital is providing an initial \$25,000 in financial support to amplify the important work of The 15 White Coats organization, which provides scholarships and resources to high school students, college students, medical school applicants, and medical students.

The 15 White Coats is collaborating with Children’s Hospital’s ThriveKids Student Wellness Project to help Greater New Orleans area students reimagine their futures and understand their talent, worth, and limitless potential. A group of The 15 White Coats medical school students is visiting schools in partnership with Children’s Hospital on a regular basis, serving as mentors for minority students with the goal to inspire students of color to become doctors.

Children’s Hospital’s financial support will help provide scholarships through The 15 White Coats for those applying to medical school, and will also be used toward the development of The 15 White Coats children’s book to be released later this year.

“Children’s Hospital is proud to collaborate with such an inspiring group of young people who have recognized a need, and taken action to create change,” said Natasha N. Richardson, Vice President of Academic Affiliations and Community Programs and Chair of the Walter Pierre Diversity Committee at Children’s Hospital. “Together we hope to break down barriers and build a future that includes a more equitable medical education system.”

The 15 White Coats is a group of medical students who have recognized their responsibility to effect change. The organization is comprised of a group of devoted, insightful, determined leaders who are committed to reimagining what children from our communities see, and to help all children understand that they are brilliant, talented, have worth, are loved, and that there is a future for them. The 15 White Coats emerged out of a pursuit to inspire and support the community, and a desire for actions to speak louder than words.



The 15 White Coast co-founder Russell Ledet, MD, PhD, MBA visits with students at a Jefferson Parish Schools high school





World-class care for cancer and blood disorders



Gaze out of the expansive windows at Children's Hospital's 4 West Unit, the fourth floor area which holds the hospital's inpatient pediatric hematology oncology unit, and your eyes are likely to fixate on a fencepost sign. It reads, "#CAMSTRONG... WE LOVE YOU."

The signage was the brainchild of Pat Barnard, father of 11-year-old Camden Barnard, who was living on 4 West, receiving treatment for leukemia, having relapsed after being cancer-

free for two and a half years, the result of a genetic mutation he carries.

Cam was taken to Children's Hospital New Orleans, the only facility in the state that performs pediatric bone marrow transplants, where the oncology team clicked into high gear, trying to figure out the best options, while the young boy underwent a new series of diagnostic tests.

"I thought it sucked," recalled Cam, who



was just starting a new baseball season in his hometown of Lafayette. "They did tell me in Baton Rouge, where I was first being treated, that sometimes cancer comes back, but I didn't think it would happen to me."

It was a crushing blow to Cam's entire family, who thought after years of treatment, he was out of the woods.

"While Cam was undergoing chemo, he was put in a room which overlooked the gorgeous baseball field next door," remembered dad Pat. "My son was always looking out of that window, as Newman's baseball team practices there. I thought to myself, why not give him something encouraging to stare at?"

Being industrious, Pat made a series of phone calls to find out how to turn his idea into a reality, and lo and behold, it came to pass. Not only was the sign erected, but after a discussion with the Newman coach, they decided to have all of the baseball players turn around on cue to wave to Cam up in his hospital bed.

"I had no idea about this," remembered Cam. "My dad opened the blinds one afternoon, and there it was. When the baseball players all waved at me, I was really surprised! I had mouth sores so bad, I couldn't eat. So,

strangers taking the time to tell me they were thinking of me was really great."

That fencepost sign still stands, being resurrected after Hurricane Ida blew it away. And, although Cam is now an outpatient, after his bone marrow transplant, it serves as inspiration to all of the other kids at the center, who ask about it and ultimately take away the message that there is always hope.

The Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at Children's Hospital, its formal name, is the only pediatric cancer center in the state and the entire Gulf Coast region which offers bone marrow transplants, as well as the sophisticated CAR T-cell therapy, in which a patient's T-cells, responsible for immunity, are manipulated in the laboratory to bind with cancer cells, and kill them.

"That's exactly why Cam Barnard ended up here," explained oncologist Dr. Zachary Leblanc, who performed Cam's bone marrow transplant. "When Cam's bloodwork showed he had relapsed it was determined he needed a bone marrow transplant, and there were two options. He could go to St. Jude Hospital in Memphis or come to Children's Hospital New Orleans, where the same services were offered, but would allow Cam and his family

to stay much closer to their home in Lafayette. Cam's relapse and need of a transplant had a lot to do with a genetic mutation known as Philadelphia chromosome, which he carries in his cancer cells, making the treatment of his Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) much more difficult."

The first step in the process was working with Cam's primary oncologist at Children's, Dr. Cori Morrison, who was responsible for preparing him for transplantation, both physically and psychologically.

"It was March 10, 2021, and he came to us wheeled in on a stretcher," remembered Dr. Morrison. "This was a scary new place, in a new city, with new people. I explained to Cam that this was a safe place to ask any questions he had, and to know that we would be embarking on a new treatment to hopefully cure him of his cancer. I told him that first we would need to get his body into remission, free of cancer. If we could attain that, we would prepare him for a bone marrow transplant from a living donor on the National Donor Registry. Mom (Carlee Barton) and dad told me to give it to him straight, so that's just what we did. That meant more chemo and multiple sticks for other diagnostic tests."

In an ironic twist, Dr. Morrison herself could certainly relate to all of the poking and prodding, as she had just recently been diagnosed with MS herself.

Although not something she ordinarily shares with patients, she wanted Cam to know that he was not alone in receiving a surprising diagnosis, and that in an attempt to treat both of them, diagnostic tests were necessary. She relayed to Cam that she'd been stuck 10 times in one sitting.

Since Cam had no full siblings, only half siblings, the ideal match would have to come from an unrelated individual. So as not to waste time, Dr. Leblanc was already seeking out a viable matched donor for Cam, while he was being bridged with chemotherapy and radiation, in preparation.

"I was looking for someone under 40, because Cam was only 11 years old, and I needed the stem cells to last as long as possible," recounted Leblanc. "If I were to find a 60-year-old donor, that might be fine for an adult transplant, but stem cells last about 30-40 years and that wouldn't get Cam far enough along in his life. Fortunately, we found someone who was around 20, and was a perfect match. And, just as importantly, we



were able to get Cam's leukemia under control with chemotherapy."

Although leukemia is not the only cancer treated at the Children's Hospital facility, its statistics have been the most dramatic. Just 50 years ago, the cure rate for kids with acute lymphoblastic leukemia was 50 percent. Today, it's over 90 percent for traditional ALL, without genetic mutations, which is the majority of cases. The reason for this is a collaborative effort of clinical trials done across the country (of which Children's is a part), and has turned into the COG (Collaborative Oncology Group), a national database which shares information. Adding different blocks of therapy with new medicines and different ways of receiving them, rather than just repeating the same cycles, has given rise to the improved eradication of cancers.

Of the many reasons Children's Hospital is the premier facility in the state for treating childhood cancers and blood disorders, much can be attributed to the staff, which is extraordinary. Children's has the only two pediatric bone marrow oncologists in the state. And that's just the beginning.

"We have the systems in place to support all of these new treatments, which aren't routine," explained Dr. Raymond Watts, Children's Hospital Pediatrician-in-Chief, and Head of Pediatrics at LSU Health New Orleans. "That means having the blood center, the pharmacy, and all of the subspecialists like pediatric nurses, pediatric anesthesiologists, and many others which give us the framework and the expertise to try new drugs, new treatments, and new diagnostic tools. Children's cancers are different than those of their adult counterparts. They don't ordinarily come about as a result of environmental factors, but are mostly genetic... like sickle cell disease, hemophilia, anemias, or hemoglobin and platelet abnormalities. Cancer is a component of this and can be about any specific part of the body. We don't see breast

cancers, like you do in adults, but we have kidney, lymphomas, and an array of other cancers, like SCIDS (Severe Combined Immune Deficiency Syndromes), which can require a bone marrow transplant. In fact, we now have newborn screens for SCIDS."

With the advent of the newly finished hospital which had its grand opening this past November, The Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders is now one contiguous unit for inpatient and outpatient therapies. Housed together on the fourth floor, it's complete with

16 exam rooms, and an 11,000 square foot clinic that includes a spacious and light-filled 11-pod infusion center. The center's credo is to take care of any child, regardless of the family's ability to pay, or from where they come. Currently, the census includes patients from all over Louisiana and Mississippi, and there's even a patient from Honduras, who

relapsed after treatment in his home country for leukemia. Children's Hospital is the largest pediatric hospital between Birmingham, Alabama, and Texas and is currently seeing the largest African American population in the entire country. The clinic treats the simplest of blood disorders and cancers, to the most complex, often putting patients in the latest clinical trials for new treatment.

Part and parcel of the treatment for cancers is the use of chemotherapy and radiation. While these tools have had tremendous success in not only treating, but curing many cancers, the modalities are not without side effects. Everyone is familiar with the most common short-term effects such as nausea, hair loss, mouth sores, and a host of other temporary side effects. A growing concern now is long-term effects, according to Dr. Pinki Prasad, a hematologist oncologist who runs the Late Effects Clinic at Children's Hospital, and is currently the president of the medical staff. She came to New Orleans from Vanderbilt over 10 years ago, after establishing the same sort of clinic there.

"We know that most patients who survive



childhood cancers have some sort of chronic health condition, as a direct result of the treatment employed to fight the cancers,” explained Prasad. “Five years after treatment, with no recurrence of cancer, we considered these kids cured, much like adults. However, they’d have fatigue, endocrine problems, diabetes, and other anomalies as a result of the treatments. So, now after two years off therapy, we start looking for any signs of some of these issues, and we keep looking until they’re around 22–26 years of age, just to make sure they’re doing okay, and not experiencing late effects of the treatments. If something does come up, we can refer them to any particular subspecialist who would be appropriate for that problem. The harsh reality here is that for all of the child cancer survivors we see, twenty years down the road, they are twenty times as likely to get a secondary cancer as a “normal” individual who hasn’t had cancer treatment.”

For the oncologists and hematologists who must continually weigh the risk/benefit ratio of treatment, in conjunction with patients and their parents, most often the decision is to go for the cure, rather than extended treatments like lifelong oral chemo, in spite of the possible late effects.

“I weigh all of the potential eventualities of what could go wrong, and I convey this forthrightly and diplomatically to parents and patients,” explained Dr. Leblanc. “Nothing is a completely smooth ride, because with the most amount of chemo we can give to eradicate the cancer, without being toxic, there can still be other problems. Graph vs. Host Disease (GVHD) is the body trying to reject something foreign, as in Cam’s case, the donated bone marrow. But, a little GVHD is good, because the data tells us that the tumor surveillance from the donor’s marrow is actually working in the recipient.”

It’s a delicate balance that the medical

crusaders against childhood cancers are always dealing with.

“Graph vs. Host can be a worry forever,” recounted Dr. Pinki Prasad. “You can have acute GVHD rather quickly after transplantation, with the chronic sort often coming much later. But solid organ transplant patients are on immune-suppression medications forever. Most bone marrow recipients do go off anti-rejection meds, eventually.”

It takes a special kind of doctor who chooses to be with families in their darkest hours, when news of cancer is first delivered. It takes mental toughness and compassion to watch children endure grueling treatments. And, occasionally, doctors may have to deal with the fact that some cancers just cannot be overcome.

“I was a third-year medical student on my pediatric oncology rotation, when I saw a nine-year old boy with end-stage Hodgkin’s disease,” recalled Leblanc. “He didn’t talk; he could barely breathe. We tried to keep him comfortable. On the last day of my service, he was doing really poorly. The other intern and I had become really close to him, and stuck around to watch him on the last night of his life. His oncologist came to the floor at 9

pm, with tearful family members at the child’s bedside, when a member

of the family thanked the doctor. People, I’ve found, are grateful for the things you try to do. In that moment, I knew that’s what I was supposed to do. I think there’s a special fiber to the people that want to do this, and that includes the nurses. Some people cannot take this. I believe there’s a common thread among people who stand in the way of cancer, while these kids fight for their lives.”

That defining moment may be different for each one of these doctors, but there seems to be a similar theme.

“My first patient as a resident was a 15-month-old with hepatoblastoma (cancer of





the liver)," remembered Morrison. "I fell in love with this kiddo, his parents and grandmother. I was staying at the hospital very long hours, getting three to four hours of sleep a night, but I was okay with it. That's when I knew this was for me. It meant I had to apply for an additional three years of training (and student debt), but I've never looked back. I've been at Children's for twelve years now, and I love what I do."

For Dr. Raymond Watts, it's easy to look back and see the strides that have been made. In his 40 years of being a pediatrician, and 30 years in hematology/oncology, he's never regretted his chosen specialty.

"When I was in med school, I was seriously thinking about internal medicine," Watts said. "But pediatrics always looks forward. It's a world of optimism ... you're looking to the future. You cannot not fight for a four-year-old. You can't not smile around a playful child, or feel empathetic when you find out they have cancer."

The cancer landscape has seen remarkable changes over the last few decades, and every avenue of treatment and its long-term effects is on the table to be studied and considered. If an adolescent has to be given chemotherapy, they're given the option of donating eggs or sperm, in the event there are infertility issues

down the road. Everyone in the clinical world is thinking toward the future, and that includes looking forward to when chemo and radiation may become treatments of the past for standard cancers.

"In the future, I'd love to see more precision medicine, that is, targeted treatments, without inpatient chemotherapies," suggested Prasad. "If this were to come to pass, we wouldn't have to worry about the late effects of toxic treatments, many years hence."

"I would like to see all pediatric cancers get the same sort of funding as breast cancer, and other adult cancers," said Morrison. "As it stands, kids get one percent of the overall funding for cancer. We've made a lot of headway, but one percent isn't acceptable."

It goes without saying that in the next ten years, there will be better treatments, more cures, and less worries about recurrences for the cancer survivors, who just want to lead a normal life.

"Our main goal is that Children's Hospital and the center here can do anything that any other cancer center in the entire country can do," remarked Watts. "And, we're pretty close. In that respect, no child would ever have to leave this state to receive the expert cancer care they need."



Welcoming **Dr. Charles Hemenway** as new Service Line Chief for the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders

Children's Hospital New Orleans is proud to welcome Dr. Charles Hemenway as Service Line Chief for the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders. Dr. Hemenway will serve as clinical lead over the nationally recognized and newly renovated and expanded Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders, which treats more than 1,100 children with cancer or blood disorders each year, more than all other facilities in Louisiana combined.

Dr. Hemenway most recently served as Director of the combined MD/PhD program at Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University Chicago. A graduate of Middlebury College and the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, he completed his residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at University of Florida/Shands Hospital and his fellowship in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at Duke University Medical Center.

"We are thrilled that Dr. Hemenway has chosen to contribute his talent and passion to the hematology/oncology program at Children's Hospital," said Mark W. Kline, MD, Physician-In-Chief and Chief Medical Officer. "Dr. Hemenway is a trusted leader in the field of pediatric cancers and blood disorders, and will continue to advance this specialized care for the children of Louisiana and the Gulf South, along with our existing team of outstanding providers."



Children's Hospital Clinical Trials Team conducts groundbreaking cancer research

To remain at the cutting edge of medicine, a strong Clinical Trials program is imperative.

At Children's Hospital New Orleans, a diligent research team of nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, social workers, researchers, and doctors worked on 90 clinical trials focused on cancer in 2021 alone. The treatments that many of these trials provide are often lifesaving for the patients who receive them. The Children's Hospital clinical trials team works on a wide array of research projects for the pediatric burn care program, infectious disease, gastroenterology, nephrology, neurology, endocrinology, orthopedics, urology, and surgery; however, oncology research through the Children's Oncology Group (COG) encompasses the vast majority of the team's workload.

From trials that test new drugs and drug combinations, to learning how the psychological effects of cancer may impact cancer outcomes, the team is currently coordinating a wide spectrum of pediatric oncology trials. Clinical Trials Manager Robert Uddo described one trial that may dramatically shift the treatment of childhood leukemia away from conventional chemotherapy drugs. Chimeric antigen receptor T cell therapy (CAR T-cell Therapy) was first approved to treat certain types of leukemia and lymphoma in 2017 but is available in only some children's hospitals. The beauty of CAR-T cell therapy is that it uses immune cells that come directly from the patient's own blood and are "engineered" to recognize cancer cells. This allows for the body's own immune system to find and destroy the cancer cells. In practice, the patient undergoes a blood draw to collect white blood cells called T lymphocytes (T cells) that normally help protect the body from infection. The blood, which is full of the immune

system's T cells, is shipped to a lab where the T-cells are transformed into the cancer-killing CAR T-cells by inserting a specialized gene that then makes a protein that can stick to a cancer cell. The CAR T-cells then mature and multiply in the lab for several weeks before an army of millions of CAR T-cells are infused back into the patient in a process similar to a blood transfusion. The CAR T-cells bind to and destroy cancer cells since they now have gained the ability to recognize them. "When we treat the patient with CAR T-cell therapy, it should eventually enhance the immune system's ability to fight and kill cancer cells," explained Uddo. "This makes it possible to kill cancer cells without potentially toxic chemotherapy."

In 2021, Children's Hospital became the first and only hospital in the state of Louisiana to be approved by Novartis, the pharmaceutical corporation that manufactures the CAR T-cells, called Kymriah, or tisagenlecleucel. Kymriah is one of six approved types



Alyssa Lacour



Dr. Pinki Prasad



Robert Uddo

of CAR T-cells and is used primarily to fight B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common type of cancer in children, and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL), another cancer that can affect children. One of the many positive aspects of using CAR T-cells is that the side effects are much less severe compared to those that accompany chemotherapy because the treatment involves the patient's own cells. CAR T-cells have been shown to cure cancer in patients through previous clinical trials at specialized centers across the country, and the Children's Hospital team is excited and hopeful to achieve similar results.

In addition to groundbreaking cancer treatments, the Children's Hospital clinical trials team supports studies primarily focused on pain management, decreasing visits to the hospital, and even improving outcomes by helping kids undergoing cancer treatment to express their emotions. Alyssa Lacour, a Clinical Trials Coordinator at Children's Hospital, shared information about a few trials that are currently in progress.

One trial called the SPARK Study features a symptom screening app to report symptoms that are side effects of treatment, like chemotherapy or radiation. Within the app, patients or their parents can report any symptoms in real time and log how the therapy is making them feel. If the patient logs a symptom as "very bothersome" or "painful", the child's doctor will receive a notification through Epic, the electronic medical record. From there, the oncologist can see the information and devise an approach to help the patient feel better or more comfortable. Through the app and real-time reporting, the SPARK Study aims to

decrease patient readmissions to the hospital and the frequency in which the patient experiences that symptom. "A cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment is a very vulnerable time for families," explained Lacour. "This is an additional resource to help them get through it."

Another large area of study the clinical trials team and the oncology team works on is Long Term Effects (LTE) or late effects of cancer treatment, a branch of trials run by the Children's Oncology Group. Started by oncologist Dr. Pinki Prasad, the Children's Hospital Treatment After Cancer and Late Effects (TACLE) Center is a multidisciplinary clinic for cancer survivors who have been off treatment for 1-5 years. Children's Hospital is one of the only hospitals in the Gulf South with a dedicated survivorship clinic, and the TACLE Center is the number two enroller of patients in late effects studies in the nation. In the Late Effects clinic, Lacour and Dr. Prasad work with patients on a number of issues kids and teens face in the aftermath of the rigorous cancer treatments they undergo. "If they are having trouble integrating back into academics, we help with that," said Lacour. "Social services and the oncologist work together to address the long-term side effects that come with chemo like infertility, fertility preservation, and risks to consider."

These studies only scratch the surface of what the Children's Hospital clinical trials team does. The common thread throughout their work is that it is done with an intense desire to advance medicine through therapeutic clinical trial protocols thereby improving outcomes for many children who are sick with serious illnesses.

Inside Children's

Children's Hospital celebrates 100 days of nursing

For Children's Hospital New Orleans, 2021 was a year filled with growth during its campus transformation, challenges throughout the RSV and Delta Variant surges, and numerous learning opportunities throughout the global pandemic. Above all else, Children's Hospital nurses continued to answer the call to serve. To celebrate the extraordinary commitment nurses showed to the hospital, patients, and community, Children's launched "100 Days of Nursing" on December 1, 2021.

This campaign recognized one nurse each day for 100 days on social media to bring awareness to the nurses providing one-of-a-kind care at Children's Hospital. In sharing these spotlights with the community, the hospital hoped to not only recognize its outstanding nurses for their work, but to also recruit new nurses to aid in the nationwide nursing shortage and continue providing extraordinary care to the children of Louisiana and across the Gulf South.

Throughout the 100 days, Children's Hospital nurses were celebrated for their compassion, expertise, consistent demonstration of the hospital's CHNOLA values, and their commitment to serve all children. Along with the social media spotlights, leaders chose nurses at random to win daily prizes to thank them for their dedication. From iPads to free days off, the nurses were showered with a wide range of gifts during this taxing time for nurses across the nation. To celebrate the hundredth day of nurses, the Ray and Jessica Brandt Family Foundation donated a brand-new car to give away as the grand prize. The campaign was closed out with food, music, remarks from leaders and the drawing of the car winner! Although the 100 Days of Nursing campaign came to an end, the celebration of nurses and their commitment to healthcare with heart continues every day at Children's Hospital.





Mardi Gras krewe bring the magic of Carnival Season to Children's Hospital

Mardi Gras was back, bigger, and better than ever at Children's Hospital New Orleans this year. After a two-year absence, patients, families, and employees alike welcomed back the spirit and festive fun that only exists here in New Orleans during that magical time between Twelfth Night and Mardi Gras Day.

To help spread the joy of Carnival Season, several krewes visited the hospital to distribute throws, take pictures, dance and delight in the revelry that only comes this time of year.

"Mardi Gras is such a special time for our community," said Scott Macicek, MD, Children's Hospital Chief Experience Officer. "We sincerely appreciate the carnival krewes who take the time to come visit with our patients and families. The impact that an hour-long visit can make is truly meaningful. It's an infusion of joy that only Mardi Gras can inspire."

The familiar sound of brass band music could be heard throughout the main concourse of the hospital as the Krewes of Tucks, Thoth, Zulu, Endymion, and Bacchus made patients feel as if they were on the St. Charles Avenue parade route. In addition to local krewes, the Secret Order of Boll Weevils made a special stop to see the patients on Lundi Gras. The organization, from Memphis, was in town to ride in the Rex Parade for its 150th anniversary.



The krewe members brought smiles and laughter to patients, families, and staff. But that's not all. Several of the krewes made monetary and in-kind contributions to the hospital. "The partnerships we've created with these remarkable organizations is extraordinary," said Kristen Robinson, Children's Hospital Senior Director of Marketing and Institutional Advancement. "They go above and beyond to make sure the kids and families spending the Mardi Gras holiday with us have the opportunity to celebrate. We are incredibly humbled to have their support."

As is tradition, Children's Hospital patients officially crown the King of Bacchus annually before the Sunday parade.



Children's Hospital celebrates completion of 4-year, \$300 million campus expansion with unforgettable Grand Opening festivities



Last November, Children's Hospital New Orleans celebrated, in true New Orleans style, the Grand Opening of the hospital's expanded campus with donors, community supporters, academic partners, staff, and providers. After more than four years of construction, the \$300 million campus transformation reached its completion.

The Grand Opening event began with a parade complete with its very own float, marching band, and a walking krewe of patients and families. The morning included a formal outdoor program with Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, Councilmember Joe Giarrusso, and hospital leaders. Following the program, guests enjoyed a celebration with on-site activities, refreshments, and guided tours of the hospital.

"It was incredibly special to celebrate the completion of the \$300 million transformation of our campus, an unprecedented investment in child health for Louisiana and the Gulf South," said John R. Nickens IV, President and CEO of Children's



Hospital. "What's most exciting is what this new day means for the children and families we serve.

Together, with our academic partners at LSU Health New Orleans and Tulane University School of Medicine, we are poised to take on the health challenges our kids and communities are facing by offering the highest level of pediatric care, right here in Louisiana."

In 2017, Children's Hospital broke ground on the most significant expansion project in the hospital's history. The campus transformation effort brings together infrastructure, technology, and unmatched expertise to deliver a healthier, happier future for Louisiana's children. The expanded campus includes more than 230,000 square feet of new clinical care space, enabling the growth of signature services including heart care, cancer care, surgical and emergency services, along with a new, free-standing Behavioral Health Center. Enhanced by family housing, gardens, playgrounds, and green space, Children's Hospital's expanded campus delivers unmatched patient and

family-centered care, with an extraordinary experience.

"Since its founding in 1955, Children's Hospital has been the regional medical center for kids in Louisiana and the Gulf South," said Dr. Stephen W. Hales, immediate past Board Chair, Children's Hospital. "In 2017, we embarked on a transformational campus expansion, the shared vision of the Children's Hospital Board of Trustees, LCMC Health, and Children's Hospital leadership. This vision has delivered innovative spaces that now match the level of care that Children's Hospital is known for. It is powerful to see this multi-year investment come to fruition as we mark the beginning of a healthier future for Louisiana's children."

The hospital's architects at EYP and construction partner, Lemoine, were integral to the campus expansion effort. EYP took an incredibly complex concept and developed it into an exceptional master plan, inspired by the healing power of nature and music, that poises Children's Hospital for its next chapter. This came with careful planning, a robust understanding of pediatric healthcare, and incredible collaboration. Lemoine led the 1,400+ day construction effort, with more than 3,500 professionals working throughout the project. While expanding the hospital's footprint by more than 50 percent, the construction team kept quality, safety, and excellence at the forefront while the hospital continued to provide expert care for kids without interruption.

Ahead of the November 6 Grand Opening celebration, donors to the hospital's capital campaign, Extraordinary Together, were invited to the home of Walton and Jeffrey Goldring to celebrate the end of the largest fundraising initiative in the hospital's 66-year history.

"As a member of the hospital's Board of Trustees, as well as a campaign donor, Jeffrey and I were honored to welcome these exceptional benefactors into our home and personally thank them for their support," said Walton Goldring. "We are fortunate to have a world-class children's hospital so close to home and the support of the community to continue the mission of caring for all children regardless of their ability to pay for services."

With the generous support of community leaders like Betty Lauricella, The Goldring Family and Woldenberg Foundations, Steve and Patty Worley, the Harry T. Howard Foundation, Fore!Kids Foundation, and corporate partners like Walmart and Marriott, just to name a few, Children's Hospital's vision was amplified. Donors have played a vital part in allowing Children's to continue its mission, with \$40 million raised for the hospital's capital campaign, Extraordinary Together.

"We move into the future full of hope, determination, and an unwavering commitment to advance the health and wellbeing of all children," says Nickens. "That has been the DNA of Children's Hospital New Orleans since the beginning."



Philanthropy

Peek-a-Boo at the Zoo raises more than \$100,000

For more than 30 years, Children's Hospital New Orleans and Audubon Zoo have welcomed children and families to Boo at the Zoo, the annual Halloween celebration held each October. Last fall was no exception. Spanning from October 20 through October 24, the safely reinvented Halloween event, dubbed Peek-a-Boo at the Zoo, provided fun for the whole family and raised more than \$100,00 for Children's Hospital.

"We were proud to continue our tradition of providing the community with a safe environment to celebrate Halloween, thanks to our long-time partner Children's Hospital," said Audubon Nature Institute President and CEO, Ron Forman. "Events like Peek-a-Boo at the Zoo spark connections between our guests and nature."

Peek-a-Boo at the Zoo was held during daytime hours allowing guests the run of the entire Zoo. The animals were out on display, many of their habitats decorated for the spooky holiday. In addition to the animals, children were invited to trick-or-treat at over 15 stations to collect items like coloring sheets and colors, facemasks, and of course, candy.

One of the most popular attractions each year is the Haunted House. For those brave enough to enter, a creepy carnival experience awaited them. Other activities included a Monster Maze and the Extinct Animal Graveyard.

"It was important for us to continue this special event, despite the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic," said John R. Nickens IV, Children's Hospital President and CEO. "As a beloved New Orleans tradition that benefits both Children's Hospital and Audubon Zoo, we were thrilled to provide a festive and fun experience, that was safe and enjoyable for the whole family."

Peek-a-Boo at the Zoo would not have been possible without the support of many sponsors including Chick-fil-A, Louisiana Healthcare Connections, Bryan Subaru, Dropoff, Event Producers, LSU Health School of Medicine, Phillips 66, Rouses Markets, Tulane University School of Medicine, and several other schools, companies, and organizations who contributed to the joint fundraiser.





Audacy radio listeners help light up the holiday season

To kick off the 2021 holiday season at Children’s Hospital New Orleans, The Ray and Jessica Brandt Family Foundation presented the inaugural Light Up the Season Radiothon, which raised vital funds for Children’s Hospital.

On Thursday, December 9, Audacy New Orleans radio station, WWL Radio, broadcasted live from Children’s Hospital for the Tommy Tucker Show, The Newell Normand Show, and Scoot in the Afternoon broadcasts. Throughout the days of December 9-10, Children’s Hospital patient families, doctors, nurses, and other team members shared their extraordinary stories across the family of Audacy New Orleans stations including WWL Radio, Magic 101.9, B97, and Bayou 95.7.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of the listeners, \$146,500 was raised for Children’s Hospital.

To wrap up the first day of the radiothon, supporter Jessica Brandt, and patient, Shelby, “flipped the switch” to



light the hospital’s holiday tree. In an extraordinary display of partnership, all 13 of the Ray Brandt Auto Group dealerships flipped on their holiday light displays at the same time, creating a moment of holiday magic that brought light and joy to the season.

PHILANTHROPY

Local and national organizations support Child Life

This February, Children's Hospital New Orleans celebrated the opening of its new Child Life Center, a final part of the hospital's \$300 million campus transformation that amplifies the patient and family experience. The Center was made possible through the support of generous donors including the Krewe of Tucks, Spirit of Children, and Maureen and Whit Huguley. The area boasts spacious and engaging environments for children to thrive and find joy while receiving care in the hospital.

"An integral part of clinical care that sets a children's hospital apart is its Child Life Program," said René Guilbeau, Director of Child Life and Creative Therapies at Children's Hospital. "Child Life Specialists are trained in the developmental impact of illness and injury, and their role improves patient and family satisfaction and hospital experience. I am thrilled that our team now has a space that matches the level of care we provide."

In Children's Hospital's campus transformation, special care was taken to create a dedicated space to house its Child Life Program. With a new child playroom, a teen lounge, a sensory room for those with special needs, and a dedicated space for children to gather, the Child Life Center at Children's Hospital now offers an optimal space to help kids get well through music, play, art, activities, games, and more.

"Being in a hospital setting can be scary for any child," says Chief Experience Officer, Scott Macicek, MD. "We believe that kids should be kids, even when they are sick, and Child Life programs not only lead to better overall patient and family experiences, but also support improved quality and better patient outcomes."

The Child Life Center features a spacious multipurpose room, made possible through a gift from Maureen and Whit Huguley in memory



of their mothers, Agnes Cooke McLindon and Katherine Yarborough Huguley. The large space serves as the front door of the Center, with a spacious floorplan enveloped by glass windows that fill the area with natural light and inviting views of the hospital's park-like campus. The space will be used for special events, arts and crafts, patient game nights, holiday gatherings, comedy improv shows, and more.

The Krewe of Tucks pledged \$240,000 to dedicate the child playroom and teen lounge. Both spaces were custom designed for kids by kids and will bring joy, healing, and enrichment to patients for many years to come.

A highlight of the new Center, an enclosed sensory space was carefully planned for those with special needs, such as neurological conditions and children on the Autism spectrum. It is used to calm and relax, or stimulate exploration, learning, and development. The sensory room is named in honor of Spirit of Children, the charitable arm of Spirit Halloween, who raised more than \$1 million for Children's Hospital's Child Life Program.

"Our transformed campus was designed with patient and family-centered care at the core, and the new Child Life Center is a wonderful representation of that," says Children's Hospital President and CEO, John R. Nickens IV. "It is incredibly fulfilling to see the joy that this new space brings to our patients, along with the impact of our extraordinary Child Life and Creative Therapies team."



40th Annual Sugarplum Ball presented by Lemoine raises record-breaking \$1 million

A remarkable \$1 million dollars was raised for Children’s Hospital New Orleans through the hospital’s 40th annual Sugarplum Ball presented by Lemoine, and Co-Chaired by Sarah Feirn and Marye Nickens. The Co-Chairs led a group of more than 100 committee members in executing the beloved fundraiser, which raised the most funds in the history of the event.

After a year of postponing this milestone anniversary due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1,000 Children’s Hospital supporters and friends traveled down the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City on Saturday, March 19.

“The continued generosity of our Sugarplum Ball sponsors and patrons has made a lasting impact for our hospital and the patients and families we serve,” said Children’s Hospital President and CEO, John R. Nickens IV. “It was extraordinary to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the ball after two years of managing through the COVID-19 pandemic. And we welcomed the Ball back with record-breaking funds raised thanks to our hard-working Co-Chairs, and steadfast community of supporters.”

The spectacular event, held at Mardi Gras World’s River City Ballroom and Plaza, was filled with the enchantment of The Emerald City, including food from some of the city’s best restaurants, a sensational silent auction, and musical



entertainment by KARMA. Captivating décor and characters brought the fantasy Land of Oz to life as guests traveled to the end of the Yellow Brick Road to the elegant Emerald City.

To get the evening started, top sponsors, including Lemoine, Bernhard, The McDonnel Group, First Horizon, Lillibridge, LSU Health New Orleans Department of Pediatrics, Tulane University School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, the Ray and Jessica Brandt Family Foundation, and others enjoyed Dorothy’s VIP Party, with cuisine by Ralph Brennan Catering and Events, and entertainment by NOLA Dukes Band.

The event featured an expansive silent auction filled with unique artwork, fine jewelry, vacation packages, sports memorabilia, and much more, which raised more than \$83,000 the evening of the Ball.

Additionally, a luxury car raffle, made possible by Ray Brandt Auto Group, raised \$100,000 for the hospital.

“This year’s ball felt different, and more special,” said Lynnsey Belsome, Children’s Hospital Special Events Manager. “Hitting the \$1 million mark and it being a milestone year certainly added to the excitement, but most importantly, we were grateful to be able to gather once again and celebrate as a community of people invested in the health and wellness of Louisiana’s kids.”



Roger Ogden gift to Behavioral Health Center provides patients with an outlet for expression

The Behavioral Health Center at Children's Hospital New Orleans provides specialized care for patients from its dedicated Art and Expressive Therapies Center thanks to a \$300,000 investment from Roger Ogden, founder of the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, and partner Ken Barnes.

The Ogden Arts Therapy Suite consists of three dedicated rooms, staffed by specially trained art and music therapists. Each child and adolescent benefits from one to two expressive therapy groups per day, including music and art, which is at the core of the inpatient behavioral health program at Children's Hospital.

In December 2021, Roger Ogden and Ken Barnes completed their family's commitment in support of the art



therapy program. The donation was made in honor and in celebration of Daynese and Randy Haynie, and the impactful work of their daughter, Dayna Haynie, and her significant contributions to Children's Hospital where she works as an Art Therapist in the Behavioral Health Center.

"The generous gift from Roger Ogden and Ken Barnes helps improve the wellbeing of children in our community by providing unique therapeutic experiences to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs," said

John R. Nickens IV, President and CEO of Children's Hospital. "The generous support of donors like Roger and Ken helps amplify the important work of our behavioral health art and music therapists."

Kids Join the Fight: Our next chapter of extraordinary

As we look toward what's next for Children's Hospital New Orleans, we will continue to be Extraordinary Together by forming partnerships with mission-aligned organizations, and by building environments of health, both out in the community and on our campus where children and families can thrive together. Children's Hospital is thrilled to announce a new partnership with Kids Join the Fight that will do just that.

Working together with the Kids Join the Fight organization led by Angel and Taylor Beery, and our shared community of supporters, Children's Hospital will be constructing a new, 12,000 square foot Child Enrichment Center on the South corner of the hospital's main campus.

This innovative, first-of-its-kind space will not only provide a therapeutic environment for patients and families to enjoy time together while in the hospital, but it will serve as an innovative place for patients to find joy.

Children's Hospital is grateful to the Beery family for helping build the next chapter of extraordinary, in loving memory of their son Walker, who is our inspiration for delivering more for kids and families. With this new partnership, Children's is poised to deliver an unmatched patient and family experience, along with the best possible pediatric care in our region.



Record-breaking Physician Giving Campaign

Children's Hospital, LSU, and Tulane physicians are committed to providing the most extraordinary and specialized care for every patient. These doctors not only invest their time and talents, but give generously, through the Physicians Campaign, to create a healthier future for the kids and families they serve. Since 1990, physicians have given more than \$1.6 million for Children's Hospital and their philanthropic efforts are celebrated with an annual Reveillon Dinner.

Under the leadership of co-chairs, LSU neonatologist, Dr. Jeffrey Surcouf, and LSU pediatric nephrologist, Dr. Caroline Straatmann, the 2021 Physicians Campaign was a record-breaking success. Nearly 100 doctors joined this storied tradition and raised more than \$111,000 for patient-family housing at Children's Hospital.

"My colleagues at Children's have always been more than colleagues," said Dr. Straatmann. "They are my friends, people I admire and trust, that is why chairing the campaign this year was such an honor."

The Reveillon Dinner was hosted at Meril and featured a special menu chosen by this year's co-chairs. "Being able to come together in celebration of all the work we do and knowing the good that will come from the funds raised, made it a truly joyful evening," said Dr. Straatmann.





**We built extraordinary
because they are.**



Children's Hospital
New Orleans
LCMC Health

At Children's Hospital New Orleans, our transformed hospital was designed with kids at the center - with 50 percent more space, 40 pediatric specialties, and more than 600 pediatric providers. Today, as the Gulf South's largest children's hospital, there are so many big reasons to choose Children's Hospital New Orleans. But we like to focus on the little ones. **We've built extraordinary, because they are.**

Explore our campus at chnola.org



Cancer and blood disorders by the numbers

13 

**BONE MARROW
TRANSPLANTS
IN 2021**

10 Pediatric
**hematologists/
oncologists**



10,880

square foot clinic space with
16 exam rooms and 11 infusion bays



42
DEDICATED HEMATOLOGY/
ONCOLOGY **NURSES**

2,156 

**CHILDREN TREATED WITH CANCER
AND BLOOD DISORDERS IN 2021**

#2 enroller OF LATE EFFECTS CLINICAL TRIALS IN THE NATION

90
Hematology/Oncology
clinical trials in 2021




5,538

Hematology/Oncology **clinic visits** in 2021



THE END OF CHEMO BELL WAS RUNG
34 times in 2021

80 **new** 
Hematology/Oncology
diagnoses in 2021



The best care for kids in Louisiana!



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Children's Hospital New Orleans is proud to be the only children's hospital in Louisiana or Mississippi ranked by *Newsweek's Best Specialty Hospitals in the World for Pediatrics*. This ranking is a reflection of Children's Hospital's unwavering commitment to provide the best possible care for kids right here in Louisiana!

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