

## A happy 2024

We hope you and your family have had a wonderful holiday season!

Here are some new highlights that we wanted to share:

- Stephen McElroy and Muffy Solinger hosted a successful Northern California Neonatal Clinical Care Symposium in December. The topic was "Evaluation and Management of the Patent Ductus Arteriosus" and featured speakers from UC Davis Children's Hospital, as well as UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and the University of British Columbia.
- We wanted to formally welcome Ann Tompkins in her new role as director of ambulatory operations, women's and children's services at UC Davis Health.
- We also welcome allergist-immunologist Sunil Saini, who is our new chair for our Department of Pediatrics wellness committee and will also be involved in our mobile health clinic as well.

We are looking forward to sharing more developments with you in this latest issue and wish you all of the best that 2024 has to offer.



From left to right: Shinjiro Hirose, Satyan Lakshminrusimha and Brenda Chagolla

## State stem cell agency, Shriners Children's award \$15 million to UC Davis CuRe trial

Funding will support clinical trial testing stem cell treatment for spina bifida.

A team of UC Davis Health researchers, led by pioneering fetal surgeon [Diana Farmer](#) and bioengineer [Aijun Wang](#), has been awarded nearly \$15 million for groundbreaking work on a spina bifida treatment. The funding will allow the team to carry out phase 2 of a clinical trial that tests the first stem cell treatment for the birth defect. [Spina bifida](#), also known as myelomeningocele, occurs when spinal tissue in a fetus fails to fuse properly during the early stages of pregnancy.

Launched in the spring of 2021, the [CuRe clinical Trial](#) (Cellular Therapy for In Utero Repair of Myelomeningocele) tests a one-of-a-kind treatment that uses placenta-derived stem cells to improve outcomes for children with spina bifida. The treatment, a stem cell patch, is delivered directly to the spinal opening of the fetus while still developing in the mother's womb.

In its board meeting in November, the [California Institute for Regenerative Medicine \(CIRM\)](#) approved an \$8.9 million grant to fund the CuRe trial. Shriners Children's matched this funding with a \$5.9 million grant. The funding application reviewers voted unanimously that the CuRe study has exceptional merit and warrants funding.

"We want to thank CIRM for their support of this program and our partner Shriners Children's for making this important work possible. Their funding will help us achieve our goal of using stem cells before birth to improve the ability to walk and have bowel and bladder control in patients born with spina bifida," said Farmer, distinguished professor of surgery and principal investigator for the CuRe trial. [READ MORE »](#)



[Learn more about the human trial for this first-of-its-kind surgery.](#)

## 2023 Northern California Neonatal Clinical Care Symposium



The Northern California Neonatal Clinical Care Symposium was held at UC Davis Health in December. The topic was "Evaluation and Management of the Patent Ductus Arteriosus."

## Spanish-speaking children with type 1 diabetes face barriers to using medical technology



Many children with [type 1 diabetes](#) benefit from technology — including [insulin pumps](#) and [continuous glucose monitoring \(CGM\) devices](#) — to help manage their blood sugar level, which is key to staying healthy.

But a new [UC Davis study](#) finds that if the children with type 1 diabetes come from predominantly Spanish-speaking households, they are less likely than other children to use insulin pumps and CGM devices.

The findings, published recently in [JMIR Diabetes](#), also confirmed previous research that found Spanish-speaking patients with type 1 diabetes are more likely to experience barriers to using this technology.

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## Exploring the relationship between pediatric neuromuscular conditions and sleep-disordered breathing



In a [review](#) published in the journal *Children*, UC Davis pulmonologists explored the current diagnostic tools and treatments for pediatric patients with neuromuscular diseases and sleep-disordered breathing. These can include [obstructive sleep apnea](#), [sleep-related hypoventilation](#) (shallow breathing with high carbon dioxide in the blood), [hypoxemia](#) (reduced blood oxygen) and other related conditions. Pediatric neuromuscular diseases that can affect

breathing include [myasthenia gravis](#), [myotonic dystrophy](#), [Duchenne muscular dystrophy](#) and [inflammatory myopathy](#).

The study was initiated, in part, by first author [Ambika Chidambaram](#), a pediatric pulmonologist and sleep medicine specialist. Chidambaram and other pulmonologists play an essential role in supporting children with breathing difficulties.

“The respiratory system is important because the rib cage is made of bones and supported by muscles, and we need healthy muscles to ensure healthy breathing,” said Chidambaram. “If the child has a neuromuscular disease, then, depending on the type of disease, the child is at risk for respiratory failure due to weakness in the respiratory muscles that support breathing.”

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## The rising health crisis of congenital syphilis: What physicians can do

[Congenital syphilis](#), a disease passed to babies during pregnancy, is increasing worldwide, with between 700,000 and 1.5 million reported cases annually over the past eight years. The disease can cause stillbirths, disability and death.

To better understand this issue, a team of UC Davis pediatricians wrote a [literature review](#), published in the journal *Children*, to illuminate this rising health threat and offer potential countermeasures.

“We have seen many mothers delivering with perinatal syphilis who did not get syphilis treatment during their pregnancies,” said [Deepika Sankaran](#), assistant professor of clinical pediatrics and first author on the paper. “Many were not diagnosed during pregnancy. Some were diagnosed but did not receive adequate treatment. As a result, their babies had to be admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for intravenous antibiotics.”

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**“We have seen many mothers delivering with perinatal syphilis who did not get syphilis treatment during their pregnancies.”**

UC Davis assistant professor of clinical pediatrics Deepika Sankaran

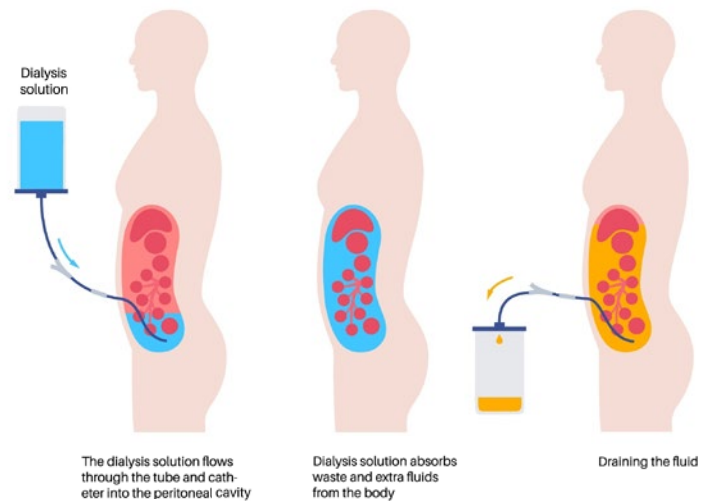


# A valuable home dialysis procedure for children with chronic kidney disease

In an [educational review](#) published in the journal *Pediatric Nephrology*, clinicians at UC Davis and Oregon Health & Science University discuss an important procedure for children with advanced kidney disease: tidal continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis (TPD). The paper outlines the advantages of this approach and highlights several clinical nuances to help nephrologists embrace the procedure.

“Around 10% of children with chronic disease get TPD, but there’s a lot of confusion about the procedure and how to prescribe it,” said [Lavjay Butani](#), chief of [pediatric nephrology](#) at [UC Davis Health](#) and first author of the paper. “We wanted to clarify some of the confusing guidelines and really go into the benefits.”

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## Innovation

### Free youth heart screening event breaks attendance records



The free youth heart screening at Oakmont High School in Roseville exceeded all expectations, with 525 young people attending the October event. The daylong event helped to identify undiagnosed heart conditions in youths 12 to 25 years old.

This was the third free youth heart screening hosted by the [Kyle J. Taylor Foundation](#) (KJTF), [UC Davis Health](#) and [Project ADAM Sacramento](#).

“This event blew our previous events out of the water!” said Rebecca McCormac, Project ADAM Sacramento coordinator, who said past events have seen an average of 300 attendees. “We have never had so many people show up to be screened before.”

The increase in attendance was likely due to several high-profile cardiac events, including the [shocking collapse of Bronney James](#) during college basketball practice, which has raised awareness about sudden cardiac arrest and the importance of screening for undetected heart conditions, McCormac said.

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**The daylong event helped to identify undiagnosed heart conditions in youths 12 to 25 years old.**

### A new summer camp will help kids with liver disease

*Camp, planned for 2024, now accepting physician referrals.*

Summer camp is a rite of passage for many kids. Now young people battling liver disease can benefit from the experience.

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) currently affects 10% of children in the United States and 38% of children who are obese have NAFLD. It is the most common cause of liver disease in children and there are currently no FDA-approved medications to treat it.

But doctors now have access to a powerful prescription for their pediatric patients with NAFLD: A free, six-week, all-day summer camp, geared for overweight and obese children ages 8 to 15.

The HealthyUs summer camp will begin in the summer 2024, at the [Sacramento Central YMCA](#), 2021 W St. The camp will equip attendees with life-changing tools for healthy living.

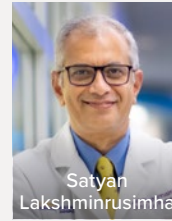
Only patients who are referred to the UC Davis pediatric GI team can sign up to attend. Primary care physicians with a patient who would benefit from this camp can send a referral to UC Davis Pediatric GI at **800-823-4543** and ask to be seen by pediatric gastroenterologists Arthur de Lorimier or Sindhura Batchu.

Referring physicians can also reach out via email to Arthur de Lorimier at [adelorimier@ucdavis.edu](mailto:adelorimier@ucdavis.edu) and Sindhura Batchu at [sbatchu@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sbatchu@ucdavis.edu)

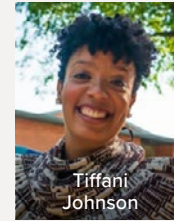


# American Academy of Pediatrics honors 3 UC Davis Health physicians

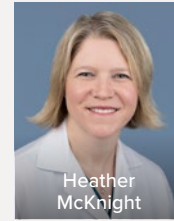
Three UC Davis Health physicians were among the 60 pediatricians, pediatric subspecialists and trainees who were recognized by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). Those selected were recognized for exemplary achievements in advocacy, practice and research that impact the care of children every day.



Satyan  
Lakshminrusimha



Tiffani  
Johnson

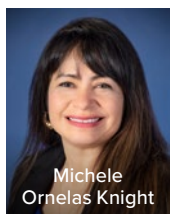


Heather  
McKnight

- [Satyan Lakshminrusimha](#), chair and professor in the [Department of Pediatrics](#) and pediatrician-in-chief at [UC Davis Children's Hospital](#), received the AAP Education Award for his work on the Council on Communications and Media, the Committee on Pediatric Education and the Committee on Continuing Medical Education. It is the first time a neonatologist has received this award.
- [Tiffani Johnson](#), associate professor of emergency medicine at [UC Davis Health](#), received an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award for her work on the AAP Board of Directors. The AAP also honored Johnson with the Jane Knapp Emerging Pediatric Emergency Medicine Leader Award. It recognizes a [Section of Emergency Medicine](#) member who has made outstanding contributions to the field of pediatric emergency medicine during the first 10 years of their career.
- [Heather McKnight](#), division chief of pediatric hospital medicine at the UC Davis [School of Medicine](#), received the Section on Hospital Medicine Service Award. This honored her work as co-chair for the Section on Hospital Medicine Subcommittee on Division Directors and as a member of the section's population health management Women and LGBTQIA+ subcommittees.

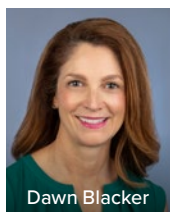
## CAARE Center announces new leadership team

[A new leadership team at the UC Davis CAARE Diagnostic and Treatment Center was announced.](#)



Michele  
Ornelas Knight

[Michele Ornelas Knight](#) has been appointed the center's director. Ornelas Knight was co-director and oversees the center's [Medi-Cal program](#). Her areas of specialty include trauma, child abuse, adolescent eating disorders and suicidality. She has been committed to providing quality and effective mental health services to underserved populations and is focused on improving their access to effective mental health care.



Dawn Blacker

[Dawn Blacker](#) has been appointed director of clinical operations and training. Blacker oversees the training program and provides supervision in [Parent-Child Interaction Therapy](#) (PCIT), [Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#) (TF-CBT) and conducts services for sexually exploited youth. She has co-developed web courses on sexual exploitation and is co-chair of the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) (NCTSN) Child Trafficking Workgroup.



Susan Timmer

[Susan Timmer](#) has been named research director. Timmer serves as the director of mental health research and is a faculty member of the Human Development Graduate Group. She co-developed [Parent-Child Care \(PC-CARE\)](#) and is the principal investigator of several NCTSN grants related to PC-CARE training and service provision.

Ornelas Knight, Blacker and Timmer have all worked at the CAARE Diagnostic and Treatment Center for more than 20 years.

## Shaikh will lead American Academy of Pediatrics project on adolescent substance use and mental health



Ulfat Shaikh

[Ulfat Shaikh](#), professor of pediatrics and medical director of health care quality at [UC Davis Health](#), has been appointed project leader for the [American Academy of Pediatrics'](#)

national primary care quality improvement collaborative. Shaikh will focus on how primary care clinics can prevent and treat substance use and improve mental health in adolescents.

The national project, funded by a grant from the [Elevance Health Foundation](#), will run through March 2025.

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# Stockton prenatal clinic opens new location

**A new Stockton clinic location for patients with high-risk pregnancies is now open.**

The space houses UC Davis Health's Prenatal Diagnosis of Northern California as well as the [UC Davis Fetal Cardiology Clinic](#). Both clinics are linked to the [UC Davis Fetal Care and Treatment Center](#), the first comprehensive multidisciplinary fetal diagnosis and therapy center in inland Northern California.

The community-based clinic is located at 5757 Pacific Ave., Suite 132-A, in the Stonecreek Village Shopping Center in Stockton. It provides comprehensive counseling, genetic screening and diagnostic testing for fetal anomalies. The newly expanded footprint triples patient capacity compared to the former clinic location and includes six dedicated state-of-the-art ultrasound



machines. The space also enables the [fetal echocardiography](#) team to increase patient access from two days per month to weekly, on Mondays.

"We look forward to providing excellent care and service in the San Joaquin Valley in this newly expanded, state-of-the-art space," said [Herman Hedriana](#), director of [Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#) at [UC Davis Health](#). "With our new clinic, we will be able to help more patients from south Sacramento to lower central California, as far east as the Nevada border and west to Sonoma."

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## Local fetal and cardiac surgery team saves Folsom baby with heart defect



When a routine ultrasound at 20 weeks revealed a potential heart defect in their developing baby, Stephanie and Travis Dover of Folsom were caught off guard. As the parents of six other children, including three who were born at home without issue, they had not faced something like this.

"I'm an ultrasound technician and I was not really worried at first. We often request additional pictures," Travis Dover said. "But when I got the report, I didn't believe it. I was like, 'Oh my goodness. Really? This condition is like 1 in 3,000 to 4,000.'"

The ultrasound showed it was likely [d-TGA](#), Dextro-Transposition of the Great Arteries. This birth defect involves the two main arteries carrying blood out of the heart. In cases of d-TGA, the arteries are switched in position, or "transposed", which leaves the heart without oxygenated blood. Babies with d-TGA need surgery within days of birth.

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## Mother-daughter nurses started their careers on the same unit

**Mary Rose and Crescencia Corey are now officially UC Davis Health coworkers and advocates for women's health.**

Crescencia wonders if her new coworkers are scratching their heads. Because in October she began her nursing residency at the University Birthing Suites/T3 postpartum units, which is exactly where her mother started her own career over 30 years ago.

And if their last names look familiar, it's because Crescencia Corey's mom, Mary Rose Corey, still works at UC Davis Health, in Employee Health Services.

Talk about twinning.

Crescencia Corey listens with admiration to her mom during our interview in the North Addition Office Building. You can tell they are close.

Mary Rose beams with pride about her daughter's journey: her degree in child development from Sacramento State, her pivot to nursing, and the many hours of diligent studying she has completed. She remembers giving birth to Crescencia, in the very labor and delivery unit her daughter now works. The obstetrician who delivered Crescencia, Nina Boe, still works for the department.

It all seems like kismet, as if it were meant to be.

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Mary Rose and Crescencia Corey



## Child cured of epileptic seizures, thanks to neurological surgery team

On a typical day, 5-year-old Savon would endure six to nine seizures — some days, even more.

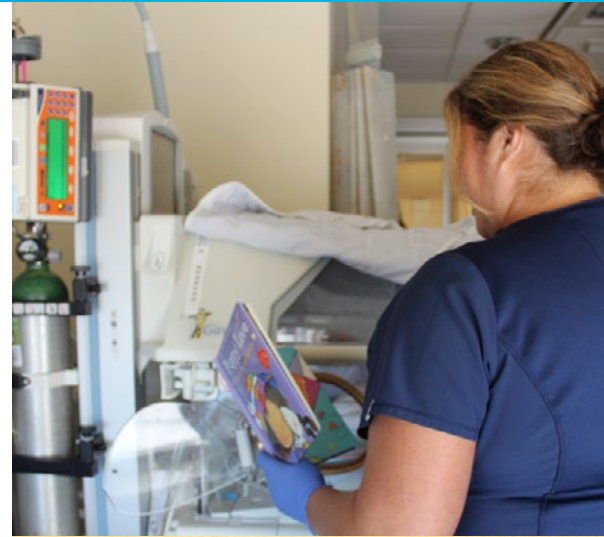


Click to watch video online

“Some days, the seizures came so fast that we lost count. It was an incredibly distressing and overwhelming time,” said Francis Kageche, Savon’s father.

But this year, Savon received the surgery that changed everything for him.

UC Davis Health’s Chief of Pediatric Epilepsy [Julia Sharma](#), assisted by pediatric neurosurgeon [MARIKE ZWIENENBERG](#) and functional neurosurgeon [David Brandman](#), performed a right functional [hemispherotomy](#). During the complex surgery, the entire right hemisphere of the brain is disconnected from the rest of the brain. The surgery took six hours and was successful. [READ MORE »](#)



## Board books needed for NICU families

The public is invited to support hospitalized babies and their families by donating board books through the Amazon wish list.

NICU families receive the books to keep and take home. Due to infection control policies, all books must be brand new.

“Reading to babies promotes the development of language skills, supports bonding between baby and caregiver, and can help establish a routine and promote normalization of the hospital environment,” said Cleo Lacey, NICU child life specialist at UC Davis Children’s Hospital. “Thank you in advance for supporting our NICU families.”



**View the wish list**  
[ucdavis.health/NICUboardbooks](https://ucdavis.health/NICUboardbooks)

## Football player receives a cheerful surprise and world-class care after game injury

“My son was playing his first football game of the 2023 season and in the fourth quarter landed wrong on his left arm after completing a tackle. He rolled in pain, and I took him to the UC Davis Pediatric Emergency Department because he was in so much pain.



He was admitted and scheduled for a surgery to fix a radial head fracture on his left arm. When we were in pre-op, Julian mentioned being a fan of the 49ers and to our surprise, his surgeon Dr. Leshikar drew an amazing logo for him. It was a great surprise for him when he woke up after surgery.

Thank you to all at UC Davis Children’s Hospital for going above and beyond. Everyone was super friendly and attentive. They made sure Julian was the most comfortable he could be while at the hospital.” — Patient testimonial submitted by Sara Sandoval

**Get social** — like us, follow us, share with your networks!

[facebook.com/ucdavischildrenshospital](https://facebook.com/ucdavischildrenshospital) has **15,088** likes!

[instagram.com/ucdavischildren](https://instagram.com/ucdavischildren) has **5,163** followers!



**Share your patient story!**