

Happy fall, all!

As we near the time of Thanksgiving, we want to share our gratitude to our care teams who continues to go above and beyond for our pediatric patients and their families.

As you dive into the fall issue of Progress Notes, you'll find many exciting stories that highlight world-class patient care we provide, close to home. We are delighted to share our Best Children's Hospitals U.S. News rankings, where we have ranked in three specialty areas in the top 50 nationwide. Our pediatric bone marrow transplant program received its accreditation from the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT), following the recent revitalization of the program in 2023. Our Glassrock Clinic has also been honored in the Primary Care Awards.

These are just a few exciting examples of the work that our teams are making possible!

In other news, we want to wish a happy retirement to Robin Hansen (who was with us for 40 years!), Hema Bhargava and Arundathi Kale, from the Department of Pediatrics. It has been a joy working with you and we wish you all the best in your next chapter!

Thanks,

Satyan, Diana and Brenda



From left to right: Brenda Chagolla, Satyan Lakshminrusimha and Diana Farmer.

U.S. News & World Report names UC Davis Children's Hospital among the nation's best

[UC Davis Children's Hospital](#) has been recognized as a 2025-2026 Best Children's Hospital by [U.S. News & World Report](#). The rankings assist parents and caregivers, along with their physicians, in navigating the challenges of finding the best possible care for children with serious illnesses or complex medical needs.

UC Davis Children's Hospital ranked among the top 50 hospitals nationwide in three specialties:

[Pediatric orthopaedics](#) (#23), which was awarded in collaboration with [Shriners Children's – Northern California](#), UC Davis Children's Hospital's longstanding partner in caring for children with burns, spinal cord injuries, orthopedic disorders and urological issues.

[Pediatric nephrology](#) (#33)

[Pediatric pulmonology and lung surgery](#) (#41)

Regionally, UC Davis Children's Hospital was ranked 7th in California and 8th in the Pacific Region, which includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington.

"We are honored that UC Davis Children's Hospital has once again been recognized among the nation's best by U.S. News & World Report," said [Satyan Lakshminrusimha](#), pediatrician-in-chief at UC Davis Children's Hospital. "These rankings reflect the extraordinary dedication of our physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists and staff who work tirelessly to provide exceptional, family-centered care for children with the most complex medical needs. Being ranked seventh in California and eighth in the Pacific Region underscores our role as a trusted resource for families seeking the highest level of pediatric care close to home." [READ MORE](#)



UC Davis Health earns FACT accreditation for adult, pediatric stem cell transplant programs

The [Stem Cell Transplant Program](#) and [Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program](#) at [UC Davis Health](#) have received reaccreditation this month from the [Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy \(FACT\)](#). A globally recognized organization, FACT sets standards for high quality medical and laboratory practices in transplantation and cellular therapies.

This is the first year the Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program has received FACT accreditation since the program was rejuvenated in 2023.

The dual reaccreditation affirms that UC Davis Health continuously meets

or exceeds international standards for stem cell collections, processing and complete care during the patient's entire transplant journey.

"Serving the kids in our region is what drives us every day," said

[Lisa Madden](#), a pediatric hematologist-oncologist who leads the Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program at UC Davis Health. "It's so rewarding. The look on parents' faces and the quality of relief they express when they hear they can stay here for transplant makes everything worthwhile. And when we do get patients from far away as we develop novel therapies, our goal as a team is to make them feel at home." [READ MORE](#)



A lifesaving dialysis option for critically ill children



Continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) is a literal lifeline for children who cannot tolerate intermittent hemodialysis. As the name implies, this therapy can be run around the clock, while standard dialysis is conducted in three- to four-hour increments. However, while CRRT is much gentler on sick children, it requires enormous vigilance from pediatric intensive care unit staff.

Now, in a [paper](#) published in the journal [Indian Pediatrics](#), UC Davis Health pediatric nephrologists outline how CRRT can benefit patients, as well as offering tips to onboard and operate it.

“Among the dialysis modalities, it is somewhat newer, and there’s been a lot of evolution and growth in both its technology and availability,” said [Lavjay Butani](#), chief of the UC Davis [Division of Pediatric Nephrology](#). “Our goal was to highlight its benefits, which settings it can be used in and why it should be used.” [READ MORE](#)



Dream team to develop in utero gene editing therapy for a rare neurological genetic disorder

UC Davis Health to design and test a potential cure for Dup15q syndrome, a condition linked to autism, epilepsy and severe intellectual disability

Scientists from [UC Davis Center for Surgical Bioengineering](#), the [MIND Institute](#) and UC Berkeley’s [Murthy Lab](#) are developing an in-utero gene editing technology to fix mutations causing severe neurologic conditions.

Led by UC Davis Bioengineer [Aijun Wang](#), the team will design and test a therapy targeting the UBE3A gene. Overexpression of this gene contributes to Dup15q syndrome, and its absence leads to Angelman syndrome. Both conditions are profound neurodevelopmental conditions that could co-occur with autism.

[Dup15q syndrome](#) affects about 1 in 5,000 individuals. It is 10 times more common in people with autism and intellectual disability. More than half of patients with Dup15q experience epilepsy.

“There is no readily available cure for Dup15q syndrome. Caring for chronically ill children with this condition places a significant emotional and financial burden on their families,” said Wang, professor of surgery and biomedical engineering. “The goal of the gene editing therapy we are developing is to one day treat Dup15q in utero so that children are born without the condition.”

Wang is the vice chair for translational research, innovation and entrepreneurship at the Department of Surgery. He co-directs the Center for Surgical Bioengineering and leads [Wang Lab](#), a prime research hub in stem cell therapy and gene editing for early treatments of conditions such as [spina bifida](#) and [Duchenne muscular dystrophy](#).

This new work will be funded by a 5-year \$3.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health’s [National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#). [READ MORE](#)



Autistic children more likely to experience persistent gastrointestinal problems

Children diagnosed with autism are far more likely to experience ongoing gastrointestinal (GI) problems than their typically developing peers. That’s the finding of a new [UC Davis MIND Institute](#) study published in [Autism](#). The research also found that these stomach and digestive issues are linked to greater challenges with sleep, communication, sensory processing and behavior.

The study followed 475 children between the ages of 2 and 12, including 322 children with autism and 153 with typical development. Families participated in detailed physician-led interviews at multiple time points. This allowed researchers to track both the frequency and persistence of gastrointestinal symptoms throughout childhood.

The findings show that autistic children were not only more likely to report GI problems, but they were also more likely to have multiple symptoms at once. It was also more likely for these symptoms to persist over many years. Importantly, these symptoms often did not have an identified medical cause. This highlights the need for clinicians and families to pay closer attention to children’s overall health and well-being.

“The connection between autism and gut symptoms has not been fully understood. Parents often sense that their child is having digestive issues, but can’t tell what is causing them,” said [Bibiana Restrepo](#), the lead author of the study. She is a developmental pediatrician and a professor in the [Department of Pediatrics](#). “Our research shows that these symptoms are common, persistent, and can affect many areas of a child’s daily life. By identifying and treating them, we may be able to improve both physical comfort and developmental outcomes.”

[READ MORE](#)

UC Davis experts call for greater physician awareness and screening of fragile X-related conditions

UC Davis MIND Institute researchers Randi and Paul Hagerman are calling for increased awareness and screening for fragile X-associated conditions. In a [new paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine](#), the husband-and-wife physician-scientists note that the group of genetic conditions is still not widely recognized by health care providers, despite decades of research.

In the paper, the Hagermans note that anyone with a diagnosis of autism or intellectual disability should be screened for fragile X. “Unfortunately, this isn’t happening consistently, even though it’s recommended by the leading medical organizations,” said Distinguished Professor [Randi Hagerman](#), a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and MIND Institute founding medical director. “It’s a simple blood test, is usually covered by insurance or Medicaid/Medi-Cal and is absolutely necessary for these conditions.” [READ MORE](#)



AWARDS AND HONORS

American Academy of Pediatrics honors two UC Davis Health faculty

Two [UC Davis Children’s Hospital](#) physicians were among more than 90 pediatricians, pediatric subspecialists and trainees recognized this year by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) for exemplary achievements in advocacy, practice and research that impact the care of children. The awards were given at the AAP [National Conference and Exhibition](#) in Denver.

Council on Community Pediatrics’ Local Hero Award: Érik Fernández y García



[Érik Fernández y García](#) was honored with the [Council on Community Pediatrics’ Local Hero Award](#). He is the first UC Davis Health pediatrician to win this award. The award recognizes pediatricians who champion community-based initiatives and advocacy for children and who go above and beyond in their work to improve children’s health within their local community.

Fernández y García is professor of clinical pediatrics in the UC Davis School of Medicine and an academic coach with its [TEACH-MS](#) cohort. He also leads the Office of Population Health’s systemwide health care collaborative. He is a commissioner for [First 5 Sacramento](#), a coach for [Special Olympics Northern California](#), and UC Davis director of regional systems improvement for ACEs Aware.

He chose to be a doctor to provide care to the community in which he was raised and lift up the voices of those that he serves.

“So, my joy that I hold on to is that I’ve been able to do both of those things, serve clinically the community where I grew up, in Sacramento and the Bay Area in several FQHCs and University sites, and also lift up their voices in research; city, county and state government activities; institutional systems design committees; and teaching, for the last 30 years through lots of what seemed like at the time similar insurmountable societal barriers,” Fernández y García said.

Section on Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine’s Virginia Apgar Award: Satyan Lakshminrusimha

[Satyan Lakshminrusimha](#) was presented with the prestigious [Virginia Apgar Award](#) by the AAP’s Section on Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine. The award honors an individual whose career has had a sustained and profound influence on the welfare of newborn infants. The Virginia Apgar Award is made possible by a continuing grant from Abbott Nutrition.



Lakshminrusimha is pediatrician-in-chief and the Dennis and Nancy Marks Endowed Chair in Pediatrics at UC Davis Children’s Hospital. He is also executive associate dean of the [UC Davis School of Medicine](#). He received the [AAP Education Award](#) in 2023 for his work on the Council on Communications and Media, the Committee on Pediatric Education and the Committee on Continuing Medical Education.

“I am humbled and honored to receive the Virginia Apgar award from the American Academy of Pediatrics for 2025,” Lakshminrusimha said. “Neonatal critical care physicians care for the tiniest and most vulnerable human beings and their families. Our goal is to reduce mortality and morbidity of these neonates not only in the U.S. but all over the world.”

He added: “There is an urgent need to support the providers such as neonatologists and other pediatric subspecialists, with flexible staffing models, compensation and support to pursue scientific and scholarly activities to improve patient safety and outcomes in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. We are committed to enhancing provider engagement and involving families in shared decision making, and to strive to improve the care of critically ill newborns.”

Kawatu named interim associate chief medical officer of children's health



David Kawatu, professor of pediatrics and pediatric gastroenterologist, has been selected as the interim associate chief medical officer for children's health at [UC Davis Medical Center](#).

Kawatu oversees day-to-day operations of the children's hospital and works closely with the children's hospital medical directors and physician advisors.

"I am glad to be back home and look forward to working with the exceptionally talented team at [UC Davis Children's Hospital](#) in our quest to deliver world-class care for the children and families we serve," Kawatu said.

Kawatu recently returned to UC Davis after spending six years at Arkansas Children's Hospital. He was previously the chief of pediatric gastroenterology at UC Davis Health.

Prior to Kawatu's appointment, [JoAnne Natale](#), professor of pediatrics and vice chair of Quality and Safety, served in this role.

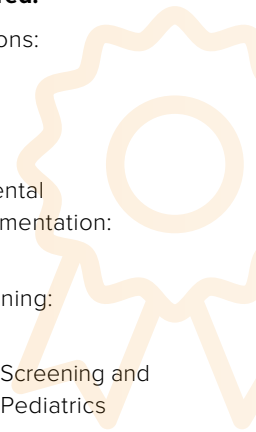
Kawatu works closely with Chief Medical Officer [Joseph Galante](#) and Associate Chief Nursing Officer [Brenda Chagolla](#) to provide overall support to the children's hospital.

2025 Ambulatory Quality Awards honor top clinics

Each year, the Ambulatory Quality Awards at UC Davis Health celebrate the clinicians and staff who compete each year for the organization's top honors in primary care.

Congratulations to these pediatric clinics that were honored:

- Pediatric Immunizations: Davis Pediatrics
- HPV Immunizations: Midtown Pediatrics
- Pediatric Developmental Screening and Documentation: Roseville Pediatrics
- Pediatric Lipid Screening: Midtown Pediatrics
- Pediatric Depression Screening and Follow-Up: Midtown Pediatrics



Happy retirement

Congratulations to Hema Bhargava, Robin Hansen and Arundhati Kale on their retirements! The UC Davis Department of Pediatrics hosted a retirement celebration for them.



INNOVATION

New cryotherapy used to retrieve foreign body in child

[UC Davis Health](#) pediatric and interventional pulmonologists successfully removed a stick from a pediatric patient's airway, with the innovative use of cryotherapy.

Cryotherapy is a new method used during a [bronchoscopy](#) (a medical procedure that uses a thin, lighted tube, to examine the airway and lungs) to remove objects from the lungs. A special tool called a [cryoprobe](#) is placed on the object or surrounding tissue. It quickly freezes the area, causing the object to stick to the probe. This makes it easier to pull the object out safely through the bronchoscope.

This technique is used to help remove mucous plugs, blood clots and foreign bodies in the airway that contain high water content for freezing and adhering to the cryoprobe. It has been used to freeze and remove mucus in patients who can't cough it up themselves. But in this case, it was used to help pull out a 6-centimeter piece of stick that was lodged in a child's airway for three months. [READ MORE](#)



Baby boom

The UC Davis Health Labor and Delivery team delivered 1,990 babies during the Fiscal Year 2024–25 (July 1 to June 30). This doesn't just continue an upward trend — it marks the most deliveries for the organization since 2010!



Open house for Maternal Fetal Medicine clinic

The Prenatal Diagnosis of Northern California clinic in Stockton recently hosted an open house. Attendees had the opportunity to tour the facility and learn more about the care delivered at this site. The clinic provides comprehensive counseling, genetic screening and diagnostic testing for fetal anomalies. The clinic is located at 5757 Pacific Ave., Suite 132-A in Stockton.

Psilocybin increased postpartum anxiety and depressive symptoms in animal model

Magic mushrooms may not be the answer to postpartum depression, new research from the University of California, Davis, suggests.

In a first-of-its-kind study appearing in [Nature Communications](#), an interdisciplinary team from the university's [Institute for Psychedelics and Neurotherapeutics](#) (IPN) dosed mouse mothers with psilocybin and found that the drug amplified anxiety and depressive-like symptoms associated with perinatal mood disorders — mental health conditions that can arise during or after pregnancy.

While psilocybin and its ability to promote neuronal growth have been previously shown to benefit those with mental health conditions, the new research indicates that it's not a one-size-fits-all therapy. [READ MORE](#)



DAISY Award for Shannon Schraeder

Shannon Schrader, a UC Davis labor and delivery nurse, recently received a DAISY Award in recognition of the extraordinary care she provides to patients.

Families who speak about their experiences with Shannon often emphasize not just her clinical expertise, but the comfort and reassurance she brings to life's most vulnerable moments. In two deliveries years apart, she created an atmosphere of calm and trust, ensuring her patients felt fully supported. By anticipating physical needs and responding with compassion to unspoken emotions, Shannon helped transform challenging moments into experiences of peace and connection.

The DAISY Award honors nurses who demonstrate excellence in clinical and compassionate care.

Free heart screening for 12- to 25-year-olds on Nov. 2



One in 300 youth has an undiagnosed heart condition that can result in sudden cardiac arrest. The [Kyle J. Taylor Foundation \(KJTF\)](#), in collaboration with [UC Davis Health](#) and [Project ADAM Sacramento](#), is hosting a [free youth heart screening event](#) to help identify young people who may have an undiagnosed heart condition.

The free screening will be on Sunday, Nov. 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Monterey Trail High School, 8661 Power Inn Road in Elk Grove. The event is for those ages 12 to 25.

The screening takes about 40 minutes to complete. It includes a cardiac risk assessment, an electrocardiogram (EKG) and a physician review. Echocardiograms will also be available upon request by the physician. [READ MORE](#)

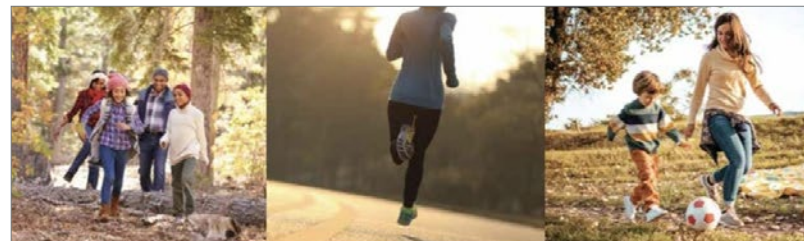
Children's Miracle Network at UC Davis awards 16 grants totaling more than \$1.6 million

Sixteen grants, totaling \$1,615,965.00, have been recently awarded by [Children's Miracle Network at UC Davis](#) to clinicians and researchers at UC Davis Children's Hospital. [Grants](#) in the amount of \$1,286,739.00 will enhance the clinical care of children, while \$329,226.00 was awarded for research directly improving the health and welfare of children.

Each fiscal year, applications are accepted by Children's Miracle Network (CMN) for both clinical services and research grants. Each application must demonstrate how the project or research contributes to [UC Davis Health strategic goals](#) or UC Davis Medical Center institutional goals. The amount awarded each year is determined

by the CMN Executive Committee and Chief Executive Officer of UC Davis Medical Center.

[READ MORE](#)



UC DAVIS HEALTH

UCAN™ Bootcamp

Take Control of Your Breathing!

For COPD & Asthma Patients and Their Caregivers

Saturday, November 8, 2025
8:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Pediatric session begins at 10 AM

Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, Hall 1800
2570 48th St, Sacramento, CA 95817

UC Davis Health invites:

- Adults living with COPD or severe asthma
- Families and caregivers of children with asthma

Why Attend?

- Learn how to take control of your condition
- Help your child play and thrive like everyone else
- Support your loved ones with confidence and care
- Enjoy lunch, parking, and giveaways — all FREE!

**Parent supervision required for youth participants*

Who Can? UCAN! We Can!

Space is limited — register early!

[Click here to register](#)

Jacks Urban Eats raises more than \$27,000 for UC Davis Children's Hospital

Jacks Urban Eats, one of the newest Children's Miracle Network Hospitals partners, hosted one day of giving in which 25% of all sales at participating locations were donated to UC Davis Children's Hospital.

During their inaugural event in early August, Jacks raised more than \$27,000 to support programs, patient care, equipment and research at [UC Davis Children's Hospital](#).



Teen mysteriously loses mobility after common cold

UC Davis Children's Hospital team provides treatment that fully restores movement

Fifteen-year-old Ryleigh Dexter showed typical symptoms of a common cold: an uncomfortable sore throat, a cough and also a fever that reached 102. But once she seemed to be getting better, she began suddenly experiencing problems with her mobility.

She couldn't pluck the strings on her harp the way she normally would, because she lost coordination in her hands. When she stood up and started to walk, she lost her balance. The next day, she couldn't sit up, stand or walk.

Her mother rushed her to a local emergency room on this worrisome day last May. They ran tests and transferred her to [UC Davis Children's Hospital](#) for its expertise in [pediatric neurology](#). Ryleigh was diagnosed with a neurological condition called [acute cerebellar ataxia](#), which is marked by the sudden inability to coordinate muscle movement. This can be caused by a bacterial or viral infection and can occur during or soon after an acute infection, such as a cold.

In Ryleigh's case, the bacteria that caused her condition was [Mycoplasma pneumoniae](#) (also known as walking pneumonia). [READ MORE](#)



Q&A on Pediatric Pulmonary Hypertension

UC Davis Health is home to the only dedicated pediatric pulmonary hypertension program in the Sacramento region, bringing together experts across specialties to provide comprehensive care for children with pulmonary hypertension. Brian Goudy, director of the UC Davis pediatric pulmonary hypertension program, answers common questions about the symptoms and treatments for pediatric pulmonary hypertension.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

From patients to artists: Children honored at Creative Arts Festival

More than a dozen children were honored recently for their work as artists, musicians and filmmakers at the fifth annual Creative Arts Festival. The event was hosted by the [UC Davis Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department](#) and [Baykids Studios](#). Families gathered at the [UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center](#) auditorium to celebrate their children and the hope and healing that the arts can provide.



"The Creative Arts Festival is a celebration of creativity and imagination in all art forms. It showcases the power of collaboration across our team who help patients share their stories through video, art and music," said Diana Sundberg, Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy manager. "We're so proud of what the patients have created, and it's truly a joy to celebrate their talent and self-expression."

For the past nine years, Baykids Studios, a nonprofit organization that empowers children with serious illnesses to express themselves through the power of filmmaking, has partnered with the child life team to provide a filmmaking outlet for patients. UC Davis music and art therapists also provide support for pediatric patients through the visual arts and music.

This out-of-this-world event showcased live musical performances, a fashion show, a gallery of artwork, and a screening of films, made by children during their hospitalization. This star-studded event included a visit from Star Wars characters and R2D2 droids from [CAUSEplay for Hope](#).

Each artist received a Greatest Davis award, which included a certificate and gold statuette.

[READ MORE](#)

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

[facebook.com/ucdavischildrenshospital](#) has **15,919** likes!

[instagram.com/ucdavischildren](#) has **5,840** followers!



Share your patient story!