



Children's
of Alabama®

INSIDE PEDIATRICS

GROWING UP FAST

Medical advancements through specialized programs and essential personnel are vital to the continued growth of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Division of Pediatric Neurology at Children's of Alabama. Expansion is under way while the unremitting needs of patients are met.

The neurology division is increasing its staff to accommodate its innovative Comprehensive Behavioral Intervention for Tics (CBIT) program, which has gained national recognition. CBIT, a non-drug treatment, emphasizes tic strategies or "competing responses" for the treatment of Tourette syndrome and tic disorders. Patients learn to better manage their condition and reduce the negative impact of tics on their lives.



Leon Dure, M.D., William Bew White Jr. Chair of Pediatric Neurology and director of the UAB Division of Pediatric Neurology at Children's of Alabama, checks in with patient McKenna Phillips of Huntsville, Alabama, during a clinic visit.

"A number of guidelines are beginning to suggest that this process should be the first therapy for people with tic disorders instead of medication," said Leon S. Dure, M.D., William Bew White Jr. Chair in Pediatric Neurology and pediatric neurology division director. "The program has been very successful and has also benefited people who do not have good mental health coverage. We have treated close to 200 children over the past few years, and we almost never have to use medication to manage their tics."

The CBIT program at Children's, the first of its kind in the South, is led by occupational therapist Jan Rowe, Dr. OT, OTR/L, FAOTA. Rowe is nationally recognized for her work and travels the country training fellow occupational therapists interested in administering a similar procedure.

In addition to expanding clinics for neuroimmunology, movement disorders, seizures and headaches, UAB/Children's has added a great number of general neurology and specialized neurology clinics, including a specialized pediatric neurogenetics clinic under the direction of Amitha Ananth, M.D., UAB assistant professor.

"Since genetics has become such a large part of neurology, it's great to have someone so knowledgeable as Dr. Ananth to lead our team to educate families about their conditions, outcomes and novel treatments." Dure said.

Children's is also part of a recently concluded National Institutes of Health (NIH) study of children living in the South diagnosed with Niemann-Pick disease type C, a rare neurodegenerative condition. Participants received the alternative drug cyclodextrin as part the study. Before Children's stepped in to help administer medication, participants had to travel every two weeks for a two to three day period to NIH headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland. Now, participants only travel one day.

"When the initial study was complete, the pharmaceutical company offered a long-term extension so these patients could continue their treatment until the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration] approves the medication," Dure said. "We administer the drug to these children in outpatient surgery through a spinal tap. It's not easy to find a facility willing to do this and manage these children, but we were happy to take this program on and help make this process a lot easier for them."

For more information, visit www.childrensal.org/neurology.