



The Brooklyn Hospital Center

WINTER 2024

Keeping Brooklyn Healthy

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Caring for Your Children

TBHC has a broad range of pediatric specialties including:

- Cardiology, Dentistry,
- Endocrinology, Gastroenterology,
- Hematology/Oncology,
- Infectious Diseases,
- Nephrology,
- Neurology,
- Pulmonology,
- Rheumatology,
- Surgery and more!





Noah Kondamudi, MD

MESSAGE FROM TBHC'S CHAIR OF PEDIATRICS A Focus on Pediatric Specialties

Welcome to TBHC's Department of Pediatrics. We are committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care to families.

Our department offers a full spectrum of pediatric and adolescent services. Our board-certified pediatric physicians, as well as our nurses and nurse practitioners have years of expertise and are dedicated to providing convenient, courteous and culturally sensitive care to the children and parents of our diverse neighborhoods.

Whether your child needs an outpatient well visit, pediatric-focused emergency care or inpatient hospital care, our team will communicate with you every step of the way to ensure your child's needs are understood and met. See back page for more specifics.

In this special issue, I'd like to introduce our pediatric subspecialists – doctors who, in addition to being pediatricians, are trained in a specific specialty.

One thing they have in common – they depend on our **pediatric emergency room** as an important back-up. Brooklyn's families should depend on it, too.

You may have noticed the new entrance to our brand-new emergency room, shown here. What you may not know is that one half of the facility is dedicated



to kids of all ages – infants, children and adolescents. Our pediatric emergency room is fully staffed with highly trained board-certified pediatric emergency physicians, residents, nurses and staff who offer the critical care needed in all

types of pediatric emergencies, all in a child-friendly environment. It is, of course, open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I hope the children you care for never need our pediatric emergency room, but if they do, you know where it is now, at the hospital on DeKalb Avenue in Fort Greene/Downtown Brooklyn!

PEDIATRIC Cardiology

Some children are born with heart problems such as murmurs, arrhythmias and anatomical abnormalities. Other pediatric cardiology conditions are acquired, either from infection (such as Kawasaki disease, rheumatic fever or Covid). Others develop because of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, such as high blood pressure in children, which is sometimes due to poor nutrition and lack of exercise. Whatever the cause, Melissa Guillaume, MD, TBHC's pediatric cardiologist, treats them all.

"For the majority of children with heart conditions, we use medication and diet and exercise education to treat the condition," says Dr. Guillaume (shown here



with a patient and the parent). But if surgery is needed, as it sometimes is in kids with structural heart abnormalities, Dr. Guillaume refers the patient to Mount Sinai, which is TBHC's clinical affiliate in cardiology. The process is seamless and the patient can be followed up by Dr. Guillaume.

"Pediatric cardiac testing is our strength. We can help parents find an accurate diagnosis so a solid care plan can be drawn up," Dr. Guillaume adds. Testing includes fetal echocardiogram (Dr. Guillaume can diagnose your baby's heart condition before the baby is born!), transthoracic echocardiogram, electrocardiogram, 24-hour Holter monitoring and treadmill exercise testing.

PEDIATRIC Endocrinology

TBHC diagnoses, treats and manages hormone and calcium disorders in children and adolescents.

Conditions include: diabetes (types 1 and 2), and growth, thyroid, adrenal and pituitary disorders.

“We do a great job taking care of our kids with diabetes,” says Manjula Chatterjee, MD, TBHC’s pediatric endocrinologist (shown here with a patient).

“We give patients and their families access to the latest technologies, such as insulin injections, pumps and sensors. We can also provide visits in our office with pump trainers and certified diabetes educators.”

Because diabetes is sensitive to diet and lifestyle behaviors, the practice is dedicated to working with families to develop healthier habits.

Another area of pediatric endocrinology expertise is taking care of kids and teenagers with growth disorders. TBHC provides appropriate pediatric patients



growth hormone stimulation tests, growth hormone injections and education. “The tests can sometimes be done in the office, but we also provide inpatient admission when necessary,” adds Dr. Chatterjee. “In all areas, a big positive of coming to TBHC is the ability to use the hospital resources when necessary.”

PEDIATRIC Gastroenterology

This division has not one but two specialists, Judy Dayan, MD, and Abraham Jelin, MD, shown here in consultation. They treat the full spectrum of gastrointestinal, liver and nutritional disorders, including babies who are not gaining weight, ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s



disease, celiac disease, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and liver diseases, such as hepatitis, fatty liver disease and autoimmune and neonatal hepatitis.

While medications are available and often necessary, the division emphasizes other interventions, too. “We work closely with pediatric nutritionists to educate parents about the best diets for their child’s condition,” explains Dr. Dayan. In babies, that can mean finding the right formulas.

Interventions also include behavioral modifications. “The gastrointestinal tract is the second brain,” notes Dr. Jelin. “It has a lot of nerves and, in fact, produces the same chemicals as the brain and is sensitive to the same emotions.” Our physicians work to help kids manage their anxiety, which can aggravate chronic gastrointestinal conditions, using tools such as meditation and breathing exercises.

Pediatric Vaccines. TBHC recommends that all children receive their scheduled pediatric vaccines as soon as they are eligible. Along with the regularly scheduled immunizations, don’t forget to speak with your pediatrician about your child’s eligibility for this year’s Covid-19 vaccine (which TBHC offers all kids, six months and older), this year’s seasonal flu shot and the new respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination. For information about the pediatric Covid vaccine, visit tbh.org/vaccine.

PEDIATRIC Hematology/Oncology

Sickle cell anemia is a chronic disease usually diagnosed in infancy that requires life-long care to prevent complications and increase the chances for a full life. TBHC's Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology is considered a Center for Sickle Cell Disease and is well equipped to offer comprehensive, up-to-date care for the disease.

"Physicians send us patients, parents hear about us from word of mouth, and New York State trusts us with infants who are diagnosed through newborn screenings," says Aziza Sedrak, MD, TBHC's pediatric hematologist/oncologist, shown here in front of a lovely mural on the hospital's pediatric floor. Children with sickle-cell anemia are sometimes admitted for pain crises or infection.

The division also treats other kinds of anemia, conditions of low or high blood platelets, and disorders of the lymph nodes.



PEDIATRIC Infectious Diseases

While Jeffrey Birnbaum, MD (shown here with a patient) is a pediatrician, his work at our HIV/AIDS PATH Center largely focuses on teens and young adults. "I also consult pregnant women who are HIV-positive to prevent their babies from being born HIV-positive," he adds. "Thanks to medical breakthroughs, it's now rare for a baby to be born HIV-positive."

In dealing with young people, Dr. Birnbaum works as hard to prevent the disease as he does to treat it. The biggest preventive tool is PrEP, a medication that prevents HIV in those at higher risk. PrEP comes in a pill (taken daily) or injection (taken every two months).



Patients who are HIV-positive are privy to a wide range of services, including antiretroviral therapies, mental health counseling, case management and routine healthcare, with a special emphasis on LGBTQ+ care.

"The long-awaited good news is that today's young patients who are HIV-positive can pretty much live a normal life with the right care," says Dr. Birnbaum. "The better news is that we have

ways for at-risk young people to not even get it." For more information about PrEP, call 718.250.6559.

As a New York State Designated AIDS Center, TBHC's PATH Center provides primary care to people living with or who are at risk for HIV/AIDS.

How to Make a Pediatric Specialty Appointment. The easiest way is to scan this QR code and go to MyChart. Even if you don't have an account with TBHC, you can use our open scheduling platform by clicking on "Schedule an Appointment" and then the pediatric specialist you need to see. If you don't see the specialty listed there, call 1.833.TBHC.NOW (833.824.2669) for more help.



PEDIATRIC Nephrology

Many children who see Oluwatoyin Bamgbola, MD, TBHC's pediatric nephrologist (shown here with a patient), have other conditions that resulted in kidney disease or have a high likelihood to do so. "Diabetes, lupus, sickle-cell anemia, anyone with these disorders is at risk for kidney disease," he says.

Dr. Bamgbola also has patients with primary kidney conditions such as babies born with structural anomalies, including those children born with not enough kidney filters.

"Some 10-year-olds have kidneys that are the kidneys of a 40-year-old because of disease or birth defects. Our job is to slow down the kidney's aging, which means reducing their workload," Dr. Bamgbola explains. Sometimes he uses medications, but he always advocates for lifestyle modifications, teaching patients and their families to use low-sodium diets,



keep the child's weight in the normal ranges and to avoid infections.

"We have a similar goal with all our nephrology pediatrics patients – keep those kidneys working to avoid or put off dialysis as far into the future as possible," says Dr. Bamgbola.

PEDIATRIC Neurology

This subspecialty focuses on the study and treatment of disorders of the nervous system, which regulates and coordinates body activities. Conditions include:

- Chronic headaches and migraines.
- Developmental and speech delays.
- Seizure disorders and epilepsy. Electrical brain



activity tests (EEG and VEEG) are available and read by an epileptologist, a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of epilepsy.

- The full range of movement disorders, including tics, spasticity and Tourette syndrome.
- Developmental delays, speech delays, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Neurocognitive issues related to sickle-cell disease and stroke.

"Our work is often multidisciplinary," says Kevin Khodabakhsh, MD, TBHC's pediatric neurologist (shown here with a patient). "If a preemie in the neonatal intensive care unit has a seizure, I'm called in to consult regarding the underlying causes. Our primary pediatricians refer children with significant speech and development delays. Because many pediatric neurological disorders are chronic, it's especially important to work with the primary care team to understand diagnoses and plans of treatment," he adds.

How to Get Pediatric Primary Care. Again, use the code shown on the previous page and click through to just "Pediatrics." After you click "Office Visit," you'll be given the choice of locations. Our primary care pediatricians see kids at our hospital-based Children's Health Center (121 DeKalb Avenue in Fort Greene), or at our Family Health Centers in Bushwick (La Providencia) and in Williamsburg.

PEDIATRIC Pulmonology

The pediatric pulmonary division sees children from infancy through adolescence, providing diagnostics, treatment and management of a broad range of lung conditions.

Such conditions often involve collaboration. For instance, sickle-cell-related lung disease is treated in collaboration with pediatric hematology (see page 4). Sleep apnea can be diagnosed through TBHC's Sleep Center. Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) is a form of chronic lung disease that affects newborns, in which case patients are often first seen in the hospital's Level 3 neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

The majority of patients, however, have asthma. "Chronic asthma is very prevalent in our community, and it requires a great deal of ongoing care and patient education," says Mayank Shukla, MD, TBHC's pediatric pulmonologist (shown here teaching a patient how to



use a nebulizer). The pediatric pulmonology team teaches families how to modify the home (keeping it free of dust and dander), eliminate certain pets (or choose pets wisely), opt for cleaning products that won't trigger episodes, even how to exercise and play sports safely. "We also make sure kids and parents know how to use long-term treatments and short-term medications for their asthma. Most kids need both approaches," adds Dr. Shukla. The short-term ones are used only in case of acute episodes or emergencies.

Sometimes even with the best at-home care, acute situations arise. Families can count on The Brooklyn Hospital Center's pediatric emergency room and pediatric inpatient and critical care units. "It's important to know these lifesaving services are there, but we work very hard to keep our kids out of the emergency room and the hospital," says Dr. Shukla.

PEDIATRIC Rheumatology

TBHC's pediatric rheumatologist, Lewis Krata, MD (shown here with a patient and parent) treats children with autoimmune diseases and provides evaluation and treatment for juvenile idiopathic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), juvenile dermatomyositis, scleroderma, juvenile vasculitis, Kawasaki disease, mixed connective tissue disorder and fibromyalgia, among others.



Much of Dr. Krata's work is in collaboration with multidisciplinary teams of other pediatric specialists. For instance, The Pediatric Lupus Center works closely with the pediatric nephrology division to better care for young patients with lupus (see Pediatric Nephrology, page 5).

"One of the most challenging things about being in this field is that many pediatric rheumatic diseases are chronic and require life-long management," explains Dr. Krata. In some cases, that means coordinating the shift to adult rheumatology care when a patient hits their early 20s. Luckily, TBHC offers excellent adult rheumatologic care, too!

The thing that is most meaningful to Dr. Krata – and ultimately, most valuable to his patients – is the long-term relationships he forges with families. "I have close relationships with a number of patients and understand how their families and lifestyles impact their conditions," he says. With advances in medicine, Dr. Krata's patients "can now enjoy life like typical children and teenagers," he says.

PEDIATRIC Surgery

“I operate on every organ except the brain and heart,” says Brian Gilchrist, MD, TBHC’s pediatric surgeon. He provides a full range of pediatric surgical services including: neonatal and general pediatric surgery; childhood tumors; head and neck; urological issues (circumcision, undescended testes); hernias; abscesses (including pilonidal sinus); and endocrine, thoracic and gastrointestinal pediatric surgery (esophageal, stomach and bowel surgeries, and bronchoscopy and esophagoscopy for foreign bodies).

That last service mentioned, esophagoscopy, is a big part of the emergency pediatric surgeries performed. “About 35 percent of our cases are kids



who show up in the emergency room with something stuck in their airway or an incarcerated hernia or acute appendicitis. These are all surgical emergencies,” explains Dr. Gilchrist.

Kids undergoing surgery at TBHC are also cared for by a comprehensive network of specialists. Dr. Gilchrist specifically cites our “incredibly kind” pediatric nurses, our pediatric anesthesiologists (“the best I’ve ever worked with”), our “excellent” pediatric emergency room and our “top-notch” neonatal intensive care unit.

A grace note: Dr. Gilchrist carries his young patients into the OR and says, “You are the most beautiful baby in Brooklyn,” before the anesthesiologist takes over.

PEDIATRIC Dentistry

“We are lucky to have a pediatric dentist here, someone who specifically knows how to work with kids,” says Noah Kondamudi, MD, Chair of Pediatrics.

That pediatric dentist is William Perez, DDS, who has designated days at TBHC to see kids and provide



cleaning, check-ups, fillings, extractions, crowns and sealants. He also offers the latest treatments in preventive dentistry such as the use of silver diamine fluoride, which arrests decay without further intervention.

“Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in childhood,” says Dr. Perez. “I help families make sure that kids maintain the health of their teeth throughout their life,” he adds. He builds trusting relationships with patients (sometimes with the help of a toothsome stuffed dinosaur as shown here with a patient), in a child-friendly environment. Dr. Perez also works with special needs children who may have different behavioral or anxiety issues.

When should children start to see the dentist? “At one year old,” says Dr. Perez firmly. “That is the recommendation of both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Not even all pediatricians know that!”

TBHC’s Child Life Program assists during medical procedures and exams by preparing children and providing coping strategies. The relaxed and comfortable play environment and trusting relationships built by Child Life specialists allow children to freely express their feelings and concerns regarding hospitalization and illness. Scan this QR code to learn more.





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PEDIATRICS AT TBHC: A full range of services

Undergirding the specialty pediatric care shown throughout this newsletter are the foundational blocks of primary, inpatient and emergency care.

Whether your child needs a well visit or non-urgent sick care, TBHC offers the finest, family-centered pediatric **primary care**, available at the Children's Health Center, La Providencia Family Health Center (in Bushwick) and Williamsburg Family Health Center.

TBHC also offers an **inpatient pediatric unit** for children who need hospitalization. Our physicians and nurses are pediatric-trained to make a patient and their family's stay as pleasant as possible (see page 5 for more on Child Life). Shown here is Louisdon Pierre, MD, Director of Pediatric Inpatient Services and Chief of Pediatric Critical Care.

Our six-bed **pediatric intensive care unit (PICU)** offers a compassionate and comfortable setting along with top-quality technology. Specially trained physicians, nurses and staff provide a caring environment for children requiring advanced medical services. And, for those children and their parents undergoing premature



delivery, TBHC's **Level-3 neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)** is equipped to care for even those born under three pounds.

Finally, should an emergency arise, your child can be cared for in our newly renovated emergency department, with its separate **pediatric emergency room**, all within lifesaving minutes of our neighbors' homes, open, of course, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.