

Children's Specialized Hospital Research Center Newsletter

September 2024 | Volume 4 Issue 3

Welcome!

The Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) Research Center Newsletter provides an overview of research conducted at CSH. We regularly share information about CSH studies, lectures, and resources. Each issue also features CSH research news and upcoming events and activities. Please reach out with any suggestions or questions.

About the Research Center at CSH

The Research Center at Children's Specialized Hospital strives to advance pediatric rehabilitation by initiating and supporting evidence-based studies that explore innovative interventions, technologies and approaches to specialized care for children and adolescents.

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JOIN OUR STUDIES

Several research studies are actively recruiting participants. To see which studies you may be eligible to join, and to learn more about how to participate, see our [autism](#), [brain injury](#), [chronic health conditions](#), [cognition](#), and [mobility](#) studies.

Distinguished Lecture Series

On August 14th, Dr. Alisa Khan (Boston Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School) presented "Integrating the Family Voice into Pediatric Care to Improve Patient Safety, Quality, and Equity." To watch the recording, as well as all previously recorded DLS lectures, please click [this link](#).



Next 2024 speaker:

Be on the lookout for more information about upcoming speakers, and please contact thackett@childrens-specialized.org with any suggestions for speakers/topics. It is appreciated!

Deeper Dive:

Dr. Mayank Seth, Physiatry Research Lead

Pediatric chronic pain, characterized by pain persisting for more than three months, is a debilitating condition that significantly contributes to disability and disease burden globally. Dr. Seth's research in Physiatry at CSH focuses on understanding how chronic pain treatments impact patient outcomes, with a particular emphasis on patient and clinical factors that influence these outcomes. By uncovering these key insights, Dr. Seth's research aims to tailor pain management to each patient's needs, enhancing treatment effectiveness and improving quality of life (QoL) for children with chronic pain. His research has demonstrated significant improvements in patient function, QoL, and pain following chronic pain treatment at CSH. Moreover, his findings have uncovered relationships between enhanced function and reduced perceived pain, further validating chronic pain treatment's emphasis on functional improvement. Building on this foundation, Dr. Seth is now exploring the impact of specific chronic pain diagnoses on patient outcomes, with a particular focus on Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)-related chronic pain. This research, conducted in collaboration with the chronic pain management team at CSH and Rady Children's Hospital, aims to uncover how FND influences treatment effectiveness. Additionally, Dr. Seth is developing a study to investigate the long-term sustainability of chronic pain treatments, aiming to provide robust evidence to support these interventions and further refine patient care. Stay tuned for more exciting research developments from Dr. Seth and the Physiatry team!



Featured Researcher:

Dr. Cheryl Fields (DO, MBA, MS-Nutrition)

Pediatric Neurologist

Cheryl Fields is a child neurologist specializing in neurodevelopmental disabilities at Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH). Her career began as a Physician Assistant in the Emergency Department. Motivated by a passion deeply rooted in her personal experiences, and that evolved over time, she decided to attend medical school with the sole intention of becoming a child neurologist focusing on neurodevelopmental disabilities. Throughout her academic career, Cheryl has excelled. She received a full academic scholarship from St. John's University, graduated in the top 10 of her medical school class, and was awarded a medical student research scholarship in 2017 from the Foundation of the Consortium of MS Centers.



Throughout her residency and fellowship, she actively sought opportunities to deepen her knowledge of neurodevelopmental evaluations, comprehensive workups, and treatment strategies. She spent her elective time at the Rose Kennedy Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center, part of Einstein College of Medicine. It was there that she met her colleague Dr. Maryam Aletan, a Developmental Pediatrician. Through this connection, Cheryl learned about the opportunity to work at CSH. They both work at the same site and are collaborating with CSH-Rutgers University Center for Autism Research, Education, & Services (RUCARES) and Dr. Joman Natsheh on two separate research projects. The project with CSH-RUCARES is regarding the medical and behavioral approach to patients presenting with difficult to manage behaviors. The other project addresses issues related to ADHD patients.

Dr. Fields is deeply committed to the medical and nutritional optimization of her patients to enhance their access to therapies and education. To support this holistic approach, she earned a degree in human nutrition from Columbia University. Her comprehensive care model includes considering all aspects of her patients' needs—family support, long-term financial planning (such as ABLE accounts, guardianship, and special needs trusts), nutrition, sleep, therapies, and thorough medical evaluations.

Dr. Fields recently completed her NJLEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities) fellowship through Rutgers University's Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. During her fellowship, she presented a research project on the benefits of inclusive employment, highlighting the potential advantages of expanding Project SEARCH across the RWJBH network.

Here are some of Dr. Fields' selected publications and presentations:

- Thongsing A, Eizadkhah D, **Fields C**, Ballaban-Gil K. Provoked seizures and status epilepticus in a pediatric population with COVID-19 disease. *Epilepsia*. 2022 May 9. doi: 10.1111/epi.17293. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 35532892.
- **Cheryl Fields**, Elissa Yozawitz, Margo Breilyn, Indirapriya Avulakunta, Supriya Bisht, Nagma Dalvi, Leslie Delfiner, Donya Eizadkhah, Parmpreet Kaur, Sarah Nitka, Kimberly O'Neill, Aparna Polavarapu Ramarao, Orna Rosen, Apirada Thongsing, Solomon Moshe Variants in PNPLA8 are Associated with Developmental Epileptic Encephalopathy and Cerebellar Atrophy. Abstract at the AAN Annual Meeting, April 2022
- **Fields C**, Picone MA, Hillstrom H, et al. Do Structural Differences in the feet of MS patients have an effect on Balance? Abstract presentation at CMSC 2018 Nashville, TN
- Ghacibeh GA, **Fields C**. Interictal Epileptiform Activity and Autism. *Epilepsy Behav*. 2015 April 3

A huge thank you for Dr. Fields for this excellent write-up! We are so grateful to be able to learn and share more about her.



CSH Recent Publications

A publication resulting from a collaboration between Children's Specialized Hospital and Kessler Foundation was recently published in *Disability and Rehabilitation*. The article, "Experiences of Patients, Parents, and Healthcare Professionals in the Process of Transitioning from Hospital to Community after Inpatient Pediatric Rehabilitation among Children with Special Health Care Needs" explores the unique experiences of children with special health care needs when re-entering school after an extended inpatient stay.

From the plain language summary:

"School re-entry after extended hospitalization is challenging for children with special health care needs (CSHCN) due to school disruption, social disconnection, and change in functional abilities. The hospital-to-school transition processes include inpatient educational programs during hospitalization, pre-discharge transition planning, and the subsequent implementation and adjustment of transition plans to facilitate individualized school re-entry. Key areas in need of improving school re-entry include coordination between the hospital and school about rehabilitation and educational goals and information provided to families about transition processes, particularly for newly acquired health conditions. A common need expressed by parents and CSHCN is to simplify and accelerate the process to establish services that support children's educational and healthcare needs."

Read the study [here](#). See the full list of CSH research publications [here](#).



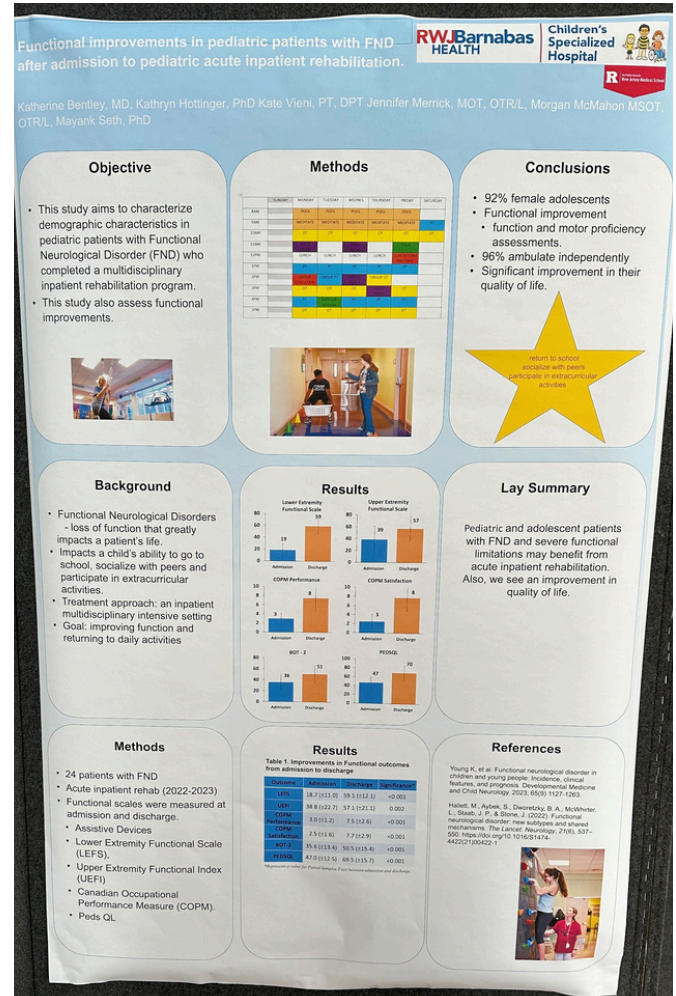
INTERNSHIP UPDATE



After a great summer, we said goodbye to our Research Center interns, pictured from left: Brithany Andrade (CIMP), Maeve McGowan (Neurodevelopmental), Pranita Sannidhi (Physiatry), and Erin Kylish (Brain Injury). We thank them for their hard work and wish them luck with the start of the new semester!

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for the Research Center internship program for the spring 2025 semester, please see [this page](#) for more information, including the link to apply.

Chronic Pain Research Team Update: FNDS Conference



CSH's Katherine Bentley (MD), Kathryn Hottinger (PhD), and Kate Vieni (PT, DPT) recently traveled to Verona, Italy to attend the Functional Neurological Disorder Society Conference and present their poster "Functional Improvement in Pediatric Patients with FND after Admission to Pediatric Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation," completed with the CSH Research Center's Psychiatry Lead Dr. Mayank Seth and other colleagues. They reported meeting people from all over the world treating FND and said that it was an amazing time. Thank you all so much for all of your hard work treating and researching this condition in children!

Learn more about CSH's chronic pain and FND program [here](#).



RECRUITING NOW FEATURED STUDY

#34793091.1

IRB Approved at the
Study Level
Mar 15, 2023



An RWJBarnabas Health facility

Children's Specialized Hospital
seeks participants to study

Cognitive Correlates of Action-Control in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

This research study aims to understand how children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) control their behavior and choose their actions. It involves completing paper-and-pencil measures and computer-based games.

Who's eligible?

Children diagnosed with ASD **OR** Children diagnosed with ASD and ADHD

All participants should be:

- ✓ Between the ages of 6 and 16
- ✓ Able speak English well
- ✓ Able to play a computer-based game

Participation in this study will last for 2-2.5 hours. Visits will primarily take place at the following Children's Specialized Hospital location:

- ✓ 2840 Morris Ave, Union, NJ 07083

Parents can request other Children's Specialized Hospital locations.

Participants will be compensated for their time and children who complete the study will receive a completion certificate.

For more information, please contact:

- ✓ Dr. Joman Y. Natsheh, Principal Investigator, at 973-391-7858.
Email: jnatsheh@childrens-specialized.org
- ✓ Amira Herstic, Research Coordinator, at 908-705-1764.
Email: aherstic@childrens-specialized.org

Meet the CSH Research Center Team

Michael Dribbon, Ph.D.



Vice President of Business Development and Chief Innovation & Research Officer

Research Focus: Intervention outcomes, Social Determinants of Health

Michael likes music, travel, and time with family.

Claire Marchetta, MPH



Interim Director of Research

Research Focus: Epidemiological factors for developmental disabilities and birth defects

Claire enjoys travel, outdoor recreation, and spending time with family and friends.

Joman Y. Natsheh, M.D., Ph.D.
Research Lead, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics



Research Focus: Neural and behavioral correlates of action-control in children with neuro-developmental disorders

Joman enjoys reading, especially Arabic literature. She loves to travel and explore, and she can spend hours immersed in graphic design.

Mayank Seth, Ph.D.
Research Lead, Psychiatry



Research focus: identification of factors underlying poor clinical outcomes, with an eye towards developing more efficacious rehab interventions

Mayank enjoys spending time with family & friends, reading, and listening to music. He also enjoys going on hikes and biking.

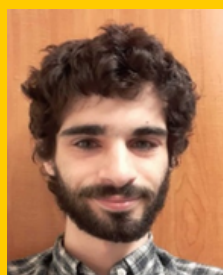
Amira Herstic, MS
Research Coordinator, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics



Research Focus: Neuroscience of language and motor development in children with ASD and ADHD

Amira enjoys reading, crocheting, traveling, and spending time with family.

Uriel Richman, MA
Research Assistant, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics



Research Focus: Cognition and child development

Uriel enjoys hiking, camping, visual arts and playing tabletop games.

Tomiko Hackett, MPH
Research Engagement Coordinator



Research Focus: Mental health/substance use disorders as well as other chronic illnesses

Tomiko enjoys traveling, being in nature, reading, and spending time with friends.

DID YOU
KNOW?

Upcoming Events/Conferences/Grants


- Pediatric Complex Care Association Conference
September 25-27, 2024. Arlington, VA
- International Society for Pediatric Diabetes (ISPAD) Conference
October 16-19, 2024. Lisbon, Portugal
- Autism New Jersey Annual Conference
October 24-25, 2024. Atlantic City, NJ
- American Public Health Association Annual Meeting
October 27-30, 2024. Minneapolis, MN
- American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) Conference
October 29-November 3, 2024. Dallas, TX
- American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Annual Assembly
November 6-10, 2024. San Diego, CA





CONTACT US




To learn more about our research, if you are interested in discussing potential collaborations, or if you have questions or comments, please contact us:

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