



Uncharted territory Establishing a clinically integrated network

WHAT INSPIRES YOU AS A PRIMARY CARE PEDIATRICIAN?

The passion that pediatric clinicians have for their work, and for their patients—it's hard to explain. We practice a different type of medicine, I think. We're very passionate about what we do. It's not just our patients that we're taking care of, we're taking care of the entire family and watching them grow together. I've seen kids from the time they're only hours old to when they're going off to college. And I know that with my help, a healthy childhood can give a kid the best chance at a healthy adulthood.



HOW DOES BEING A PART OF THE CHILDREN'S SYSTEM HELP YOU TO CARE FOR YOUR PATIENTS?

As a Children's pediatrician, I never feel alone. Children's has great resources to help me provide quality patient care such as pioneering quality and patient safety protocols, as well as excellent continuing medical education opportunities.

Children's coordination of care, in particular, is important to ensuring our kids get healthy and stay healthy. Children's makes this coordination easy because we have such a strong support system and network.

For example, while working at my office at Primary Care Center of Chamblee, I may come across a particularly complicated case file. If I have a question and I need to reach out to a Children's cardiologist, I can go to my computer, look up the cardiologist on call, get him or her on the phone and discuss the patient's care. And I'm not just consulting with just

any pediatric cardiologist—Children's has many of the best specialists in the country. It's very convenient.

And if I do have to send a patient into the hospital for care, the communication back to me is seamless.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS A PEDIATRICIAN IN THE CHANGING PEDIATRIC MARKETPLACE?

There are so many. It's a constant struggle to ensure my practice is financially healthy, and it's getting more and more challenging.

In my practice, we take only Medicaid, and the reimbursement is diminishing. As a pediatrician, going to payors and negotiating contracts for better reimbursements is also difficult.

In addition, adult markets are tacking on pediatrics into their service offerings and basically trying to take business away from pediatricians in their community.

But in an adult system, pediatricians are not necessarily providing care to the children. Even when a pediatrician sees a child in an adult system, adult providers often are using adult equipment to draw blood or get an X-ray done.

If one of my patients goes to Children's, I know the X-ray technician is giving the right dose of radiation and that my patient is getting the right films taken because Children's staff are specially trained in pediatrics. The lab tech knows how to make that child comfortable and how to control pain. It's as stress-free, pain-free and as pleasant an experience as we can possibly provide.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH HELPING TO PLAN THE CHILDREN'S CARE NETWORK?

The Children's Care Network is a very dedicated group of physicians who have been working together for several months to figure out how we can deal with the many new financial and other pressures facing our pediatric system.

The Children's Care Network will help us continue to demonstrate the value and high-quality care a child can only get in a pediatric system.

DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE NEW NETWORK. AS A MEMBER OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS, HAS THERE BEEN ANYTHING OF WHICH YOU'VE BEEN PARTICULARLY PROUD?

I've just been so proud of the way we've been able to sit at the table and take on the issues of where we've been and where we want to go. If a difficult discussion pops up and we disagree, we work through it until we come to a resolution.

The bottom line is that we're all very dedicated to our patients and to preserving pediatric care. We want the best for the children.

HOW WILL THE NETWORK BENEFIT CHILDREN'S-EMPLOYED PHYSICIANS?

The ultimate goal is for us to have better coordination of care, to be better able to monitor quality and to provide better access to care for our patients. As a member of The Children's Care Network, I'm not just going to be analyzing my own data, I'm going to be analyzing both my data and data pooled from my entire community.

As a system, we'll be using standards and protocols to do something we've never done before. We can hold each other accountable for improving community health.

That's so exciting to me, personally. I know that at the end of the day, we won't just see improvements in our own patients' health. We'll be working together to build a healthier future, too.

Vivian Lennon, M.D., F.A.A.P., is medical director, Primary Care, at Children's at Chamblee Primary Care Center. Dr. Lennon chaired the Clinical Integration Technology Committee and is now a member of the Board of Directors of The Children's Care Network.

Visit choa.org/carenetwork for more information.