

# Cystic Fibrosis Center of Excellence

Emory University - Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - Georgia Tech

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Dear friends, patients, families, and colleagues,

We are happy to provide this update for you on behalf of [CF@LANTA](#) and hope that this e-newsletter finds you very well. This issue brings to your attention some very big news.

On September 18, our two pediatric CF clinical programs (the Emory-Egleston program, and the Scottish Rite program) moved into shiny new clinic space at the Children's Center for Advanced Pediatrics (CAP). We have all watched with great excitement and anticipation as the CAP building rose at the intersection of North Druid Hills Road and Interstate 85, and the facility is really fantastic. Our pediatric programs are enjoying the new space, and we've heard from several patients that they are very happy to have this new home for their care. Furthermore, the new space includes a research lab that will allow us to better engage all of our pediatric patients in research in support of the fight against CF. We want to thank all of the physicians and staff for making this transition go very smoothly, and especially Ms. Lamarvia Stinson, Director of Physician Practice Operations, for her leadership during this momentous occasion. Please see the following pages for photos of the great new space.

We also take this opportunity to share the news that Mr. Doug Hertz and the Hertz Family Foundation have supported [CF@LANTA](#) with a major donation in honor of the Will and Ann Shearer family. Two of the three Shearer kids are patients within our pediatric CF clinical program (both are doing very well at present), and the Shearer's have been wonderful partners and advocates for our comprehensive program. Of course, we are very grateful for this donation, and look forward to sharing the details with you very

soon. Meanwhile, the fifth floor of the CAP has been named for the Shearer family, recognizing this important donation (see photos on page 5).

In addition, we report that in response to the national Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's call in the Spring of this year, our research team submitted more grant proposals than any other CF research center in the world. While not quite every one of those proposals were selected for funding, many were. This includes new research grants to faculty labs, and new postdoctoral fellowship grants for our trainees. Importantly, this includes the first CFF funding successes for some of our new faculty, such as Professor Steve Diggle at the School of Biological Sciences at Georgia Tech, and Professor Ruxana Sadikot in the Department of Medicine at Emory. Dr. Diggle's proposal is entitled: "*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* dynamics in the cystic fibrosis lung". While Dr. Diggle has been working in CF for some years, he is new to the American research funding system, having moved here from England just a year ago. Dr. Sadikot's proposal is entitled: "*P. aeruginosa* induced mitochondrial dysfunction in cystic fibrosis epithelium". While Dr. Sadikot has been at Emory for several years, this is her first CF research grant; thus, this represents another success in our efforts to draw new investigators into the CF research team. Congratulations to all of our successful grant-writers!

Please see the following pages for other great news from the [CF@LANTA](#) team. Thanks so much for your continued interest and support!

~Nael A. McCarty, PhD, [CF@LANTA](#)



## New CF Transition Program Research is Currently Underway: Thanks to The Boomer Esiason Foundation

The adult and pediatric teams at the Emory + Children's Cystic Fibrosis Center of Excellence have been working together over the last few years to make the transition program, "Journey to Independence" (Journey) an exemplary one. While the Journey program has been in existence since 2008, several program additions have been made in recent years based on feedback from Journey graduates. Recently, a grant proposal was submitted to the Boomer Esiason Foundation with the goal of increasing the quality and frequency of lung transplant conversations within our Center by incorporating age appropriate lung transplant education and discussions into the framework of our transition program.

The authors of the grant are the Adult CF Program Director, William R. (Randy) Hunt, MD, Mental Health Coordinator Shaina Blair, LCSW, and Transition Program Coordinator, Brandi Middour-Oxler, DNP. The grant was generously approved by the Boomer Esiason Foundation. The funding will specifically support investigation into the barriers to lung transplant conversations through focused interviews with post lung transplant recipients and surveys with clinic staff, individuals with CF, and their families to aid the development and implementation of comprehensive transplant education programming. The grant has several aims. One aim is to produce professionally recorded interviews which will allow post-transplant recipients to share their transplant experience with others with CF. Another aim is to create an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) to offer "hands-on" provider training and real-time feedback to providers discussing transplant issues to model patients. Utilizing the Experiential Learning Center (ExCEL) resource through Emory University School of Medicine, OSCE cases will be created to enable providers to disseminate knowledge accurately and in an easily understood, patient-friendly format. Along with developing tools to facilitate provider development in the area of patient education around transplantation, BEF funding will be used to support CF informed mental health education and direct services within all programs of our CF center to better ensure that

these complications less frequently contribute to the progression of lung disease or create challenges during the evaluation and listing stages of the transplant process.

By increasing exposure of lung transplant in medical education training, via our OSCE, we will increase team awareness and comfort with transplant discussions. We aim to change the perception of lung transplantation as a last-ditch therapy to understanding it as a therapeutic option for optimizing our patient's physical and mental condition and increasing longevity.

We are very grateful to the Boomer Esiason Foundation for this support.

~submitted by Brandi Middour-Oxler,  
Randy Hunt, & Shaina Blair



## Faculty Profile: Brian Vickery, MD



Brian Vickery joined the Emory faculty as an Associate Professor of Pediatrics in March 2018, to establish and lead a new center for the study and treatment of food allergies at Children's. Dr. Vickery is clinically trained as a pediatrician and an allergist-immunologist and has developed a keen interest in re-establishing immune

tolerance to food allergens. He entered clinical training sure of his goal to care for sick children with complex illnesses as a pediatric cardiologist or pediatric critical care physician. However, training in New York City introduced him firsthand to the modern epidemic of inner-city asthma and other allergic diseases, to which he was not exposed as a medical student in Augusta.

In particular, he found it illogical, bizarre, and even a bit cruel that reasonably healthy children could experience life-threatening anaphylaxis within minutes of eating otherwise nourishing food, because an almost vestigial part of their own

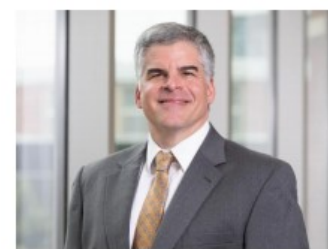
immune system became inappropriately activated. That approximately one in 13 U.S. children are vulnerable to such risk makes no sense from the perspective of evolutionary fitness. Searching the literature, he found an abundance of knowledge gaps, and an unexpected career as a research-focused allergy specialist was born.

He has spent the last 10 years in academia, with a brief sabbatical in industry, leading productive and consistently funded patient-oriented research teams focused on translational therapeutic development for IgE-mediated food allergies, work spanning preclinical murine models to Phase 3 trials. His group was the first to show that clinical remission can occur after peanut oral immunotherapy (OIT) and subsequently demonstrated for the first time that the early treatment of peanut-allergic preschool children with OIT is safe and enhances the likelihood of remission. With the first new therapies poised for FDA approval and translation into clinical care, he is now particularly interested in the intersection of translational and outcomes research in generating rational, evidence-driven treatment strategies that maximize benefit/risk and improve patient-centered outcomes.

~submitted by Brian Vickery, MD

## Andrés García Named New Petit IBB Executive Director

Congratulations to CF-AIR Center Member Andrés García, PhD, who was recently named the new Executive Director of the Parker H. Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Biosciences at Georgia Tech. García joined Georgia Tech in 1998, and he is a Regents' Professor who specializes in biomaterials, cellular and tissue engineering. Read the full announcement from Georgia Tech [here](#).



Georgia Tech | Parker H. Petit Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience

## New CF-AIR Weekly Events Schedule

This fall semester debuts a new CF-AIR Workshop and CF-TR Joint Lab Meeting schedule. To sign up to present, contact [Kathryn Oliver](#) for CF-TR and [Camilla Margaroli](#) for the Workshop. Learn more and see full schedules at our [website](#).

- 1st Wednesday: Workshop 4-5 pm, ECC 302 (Emory) & IBB 1316 (Georgia Tech)
- 2nd Wednesday: CF-TR 3-4 pm, Workshop 4-5 pm, ECC 302
- 3rd Wednesday: Workshop 4-5 pm, ECC 302 & IBB 1316
- 4th Wednesday: CF-TR 3-4 pm, Workshop 4-5 pm, ECC 302

Note: on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, the Workshop presenter will be at whichever location is convenient, and the presentation will be videoconferenced to the other location.

## A Fond Farewell to Dr. Seth Walker

Almost eight years ago Dr. Seth Walker was recruited to Emory University to lead the relatively new Emory Adult CF program. Over the next seven years there would be tremendous growth in the program under his directorship. Having been trained and board certified in both internal medicine and general pediatrics, Dr. Walker possessed a broad and in-depth understanding of cystic fibrosis. He utilized this comprehensive understanding of clinical medicine to reinforce, and sometimes challenge, critical concepts, all with the goal of pushing clinical outcomes ever higher.

During his tenure, the adult cystic fibrosis program at Emory has grown exponentially, both in terms of patients served as well as services provided. In addition to his clinical care, Dr. Walker educated future generations of students and medical fellows. He helped mentor no less than four adult pulmonary fellows who went on to focus their medical practice on the care of patients with cystic fibrosis. He also supported the growth of

gastroenterology consultation services for adults with CF, helped run therapeutic trails at Emory through the CF Foundation's Therapeutic Development Network and participated in national committees for the CF Foundation helping shape national policy. Jovial and buoyant, Dr. Walker often kept clinic lighthearted. If you saw him around Halloween you may have been greeted by Elvis, Fidel Castro or Randy Macho Man Savage to name just a few! His good-natured demeanor was matched by the care and concern he had for his patients.

Last month Dr. Walker departed Emory University to seek new challenges and opportunities at Case Western where he will lead and continue to grow their CF program. While he will certainly be missed, we wish him the best as he continues to follow his passion and care for those with cystic fibrosis. We all wish Dr. Walker a fond farewell and a sincere thank you for his service.

~submitted by Randy Hunt, MD



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## Recent CF-AIR Publications

Recent publications by CF-AIR members can be viewed online here:

<http://www.pedsresearch.org/uploads/blog/doc/2018-09CF-AIRNewsletterPubs.pdf>

## New Location in the Center for Advance Pediatrics

This month the pediatric clinics moved into the new Center for Advanced Pediatrics. We are very excited about this new clinic and research space. Special thanks to Lamarvia Stinson, Director of Physician Practice Operations, for guiding a smooth transition.



## Events for Researchers

Each month there are several opportunities for CF-AIR researchers to get together to discuss their work.

### [Full CF-AIR Calendar of Events](#)

- [CF-AIR Faculty and Trainees Research Joint Lab Meeting](#) (CF-TR): Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday at 4 pm in ECC 302. Chalk talk style talks for faculty and trainees
- [CF-AIR Workshop](#): A weekly Wednesday meeting for research-in-progress and journal club presentations. Typically meet at 4:00 pm in ECC 302, and IBB 1316 1st & 3rd Wednesdays (videoconference on 1st & 3rd Wednesdays)
- [CF Scholars Meetings](#): A monthly program for CF Scholars, Friday afternoons, see website schedule.

Sign up for the [CF-AIR Weekly Digest](#) to hear about all events of interest to researchers, just email [kmurra5@emory.edu](mailto:kmurra5@emory.edu)

#### Clinics:

Pediatric Clinics  
1400 Tullie Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
404-785-KIDS

Emory Adult CF Clinic  
Emory Clinic, Building A  
1365 Clifton Road NE  
Suite A3209  
Atlanta, GA 30322  
404-778-7929

#### Website:

[www.pedsresearch.org/research/centers/cf-air](http://www.pedsresearch.org/research/centers/cf-air)

If you are interested in supporting our research and outreach programs please visit: [www.pedsresearch.org/research/centers/cf-air/donors-visitors/](http://www.pedsresearch.org/research/centers/cf-air/donors-visitors/)

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