



## **Boys Town National Research Hospital has been Awarded a \$12.5 Million COBRE Grant to Study Pediatric Brain Health**

Boys Town National Research Hospital will create a new Center for Pediatric Brain Health using funding from a \$12.5 million COBRE (Center of Biomedical Research Excellence) grant that was recently awarded from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This grant is renewable at a similar funding level for up to 15 years.

The Center for Pediatric Brain Health will be an important new part of the recently created Institute for Human Neuroscience. Initially, the Center will support four early-career researchers who will focus on different issues affecting pediatric brain health, including radon exposure, pubertal hormone levels, the impact of hearing loss on language processing, emotional dysregulation, and how the emergence of psychiatric traits is related to brain network reconfiguration.

"This Center grant will lead to major breakthroughs in pediatric neuroscience and position Omaha, and particularly Boys Town, as an international hub for pediatric brain research and clinical care," said Tony Wilson, Ph.D., Patrick E. Brookhouser Endowed Chair for Cognitive Neuroscience, Director of the Institute for Human Neuroscience, and principal investigator at the Center for Pediatric Brain Health. "These centers are not very common, and centers focused on pediatrics are even more rare."

Boys Town Hospital is focused on taking the research conducted at the Center for Pediatric Brain Health and using it to develop the best treatment options to advance patient care in pediatric neurology and other specialties.

"Boys Town has a history of unwavering commitment to improving the lives of children and families," said Jason Bruce, M.D., Executive Vice President for Health Care and Director of Boys Town National Research Hospital. "The new Center for Pediatric Brain Health will allow us to explore deeper into neurological and mental health conditions and develop even better treatments and therapies for all children who need this care."

COBRE grants are meant to fund a succession of new researchers in a specific scientific area. As the four current investigators complete their studies, additional newly recruited researchers will move on to the grant. With the possibility of funding 12-15 scientists over 15 years. A COBRE grant is an exceptional way of supporting the next generation of researchers and building regional capacity for excellence in a specific target area, such as pediatric brain health.

Another important component of a COBRE grant is the mentorship structure it provides. Each researcher will have a Boys Town mentor that will work with them on their research protocols and establishing a

line of research. In addition, each researcher will have an external mentor that is an expert in their field of study; these can be national or worldwide experts. The Center for Pediatric Brain Health will also have its own executive advisory committee filled with leading international researchers in the field.

Boys Town's Center for Hearing Research received a COBRE grant eight years ago to fund the Center for Perception and Communication in Children. With Lori Leibold, Ph.D., as the principal investigator, the Center received renewed funding at its five-year review. Boys Town National Research Hospital is also a research partner in Creighton University's first COBRE grant to fund its Translational Hearing Center.



Caption: Meet the first four neuroscience researchers at the Center for Pediatric Brain Health. L to R: Elizabeth Heinrichs-Graham, Ph.D., Brittany Taylor, Ph.D., Tony Wilson, Ph.D., Director of the Center, Stuart White, Ph.D., and Gaelle Doucet, Ph.D.

### **About Boys Town National Research Hospital**

Boys Town National Research Hospital offers a broad range of hospital and clinic services, backed by 40 years of life-changing research to provide the latest, most innovative care to our patients. The Hospital is internationally recognized as a leader in hearing research and clinical care and is leading research efforts in language and neuroscience to improve the lives of children and families across America.

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