

Nemours Selected to Participate in NIH ECHO Program

\$1.8 Award to Nemours to examine environmental exposures from conception through early childhood

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently announced \$157 million in awards to launch a seven-year initiative called [Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes \(ECHO\)](#). The ECHO program will investigate how exposure to a range of environmental factors in early development — from conception through early childhood — influences the health of children and adolescents.

Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children has been selected to participate in the initiative, by virtue of its expertise in conducting pediatric clinical trials; its community-based pediatric network throughout the state of Delaware; its 15-year use of the electronic health record, and its status as part of the NIH-funded [Institutional Development Awards \(IDeA\) Program](#). The goal of IDeA is to provide medically underserved and rural populations with access to state-of-the-art clinical trials, apply findings from relevant studies to children in IDeA state locations, and build pediatric research capacity nationally.

- Beginning October 2016, the award to Nemours is approximately \$1.8 million over a four-year period. There are 17 institutions participating in the pediatric clinical trials network.
- The principal investigator for Nemours on ECHO is pediatric endocrinologist [Judith Ross, MD](#), who has an impressive track record of NIH-funded research and clinical trials.
- Experiences during sensitive developmental windows, including around the time of conception, later in pregnancy, and during infancy and early childhood, can have long-lasting effects on health. These experiences encompass a broad range of exposures, from air pollution and chemicals in our neighborhoods, to societal factors such as stress, to individual behaviors like sleep and diet. They may act through any number of biological processes, for example changing the expression of genes or development of the immune system.
- The grant awards will build the capacity for the ECHO program to support multiple longitudinal studies that extend and expand existing studies of mothers and children. ECHO research will focus on factors that may influence health outcomes around the time of birth as well as into later childhood and adolescence, including:
 - upper and lower airway health and development
 - obesity
 - pre-, peri- and postnatal outcomes
 - brain and nervous system development.

A critical component of ECHO will be to build state-of-the art pediatric clinical research networks in rural and medically underserved areas, so that children from these communities can participate in clinical trials.

Dr. Ross said: "We at Nemours are harnessing the tremendous resources that are part of the IDeA states network to transform pediatric clinical trials and improve outcomes in critical areas such as infant mortality in the state of Delaware and across the U.S."

"Every baby should have the best opportunity to remain healthy and thrive throughout childhood," said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD. "ECHO will help us better understand the factors that contribute to optimal health in children."

NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the [Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children](#) in Wilmington, Del., and [Nemours Children's Hospital](#) in Orlando, Fla., along with outpatient facilities in six states, delivering pediatric primary, specialty and urgent care. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, KidsHealth.org and offers on-demand, online video patient visits through Nemours CareConnect.

Established as [The Nemours Foundation](#) through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to families in the communities it serves.

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