

UCF College of Medicine students Jillian Glasser and Dennis Gross are in their pediatric clerkship training at Nemours Children's Health.



Partnering Up

Nemours Children's Health is collaborating with UCF and the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville.

Florida is below the U.S. average for its number of pediatricians, with about 69 per 100,000 children, the American Board of Pediatrics reports. Both pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists are in shorter supply than they should be. For instance, a child who needs to see a pediatric rheumatologist in Florida has to travel an average of 33 miles to a maximum of 150 miles for care, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Some hospitals and medical schools are fostering collaborations to boost exposure to pediatrics and potentially bring more children's doctors and pediatric subspecialists to the field.

One such example is an expanded collaboration between Nemours Children's Health and the University of Central Florida in Orlando, which will establish the UCF College of Medicine — Nemours Children's Health Department of Pediatrics.

Although the 480 medical students at UCF already take part in a pediatric rotation at Nemours Children's in Orlando, the collaboration will expand joint educational programs as well as bolster pediatrician recruitment and retention, says Martha McGill, president of the Central Florida region for Nemours. Nemours also is part of the UCF College of Medicine's residency and fellowship programs.

"Solidifying the pediatric physician workforce will enable greater access to treatment, closing gaps in the care continuum and reducing a child's vulnerability to health disparities, all while working to mitigate a shortage,"

McGill says. The partnership also should help drive interest to pediatric subspecialties and encourage ways to provide better care, she adds.

Nemours also is now part of UCF's Pegasus Partner Program, which establishes partnerships between the university and industry leaders to develop talent and innovation.

In north Florida, the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville and Nemours Children's Health recently announced a 10-year extension of a collaboration that began in 1993. It also focuses on training medical students and helping to address pediatrician shortages. The continued program will expand educational opportunities between the two and look at other opportunities to work together for research.

Medical students at Mayo Clinic's Alix School of Medicine complete a six-week pediatric rotation at Nemours' location in Jacksonville, in addition to rotations through other specialties like internal medicine, surgery and emergency medicine, says pulmonologist Margaret Johnson, dean of education at Mayo Clinic in Florida.

Mayo Clinic fellows and staff also use the Nemours partnership as needed. One well-established area within their collaboration is pediatric hematology-oncology, which includes joint work for bone marrow transplants and CAR-T therapy for hematology malignancies.

"Mayo Clinic residents, fellows and staff get much-needed specialty training here at Nemours, including medical rotations to obtain valuable hands-on experience in various subspecialties of pediatrics," says Michael Erhard, North Florida region president for Nemours.

Although the partnership between Mayo and Nemours has many potential benefits, one of those is attracting students to pediatrics through exposure to the specialty and mentorship.

"For example, one of the pediatric subspecialists at Nemours may spark a fire in a medical student, prompting them to pursue a certain career," Johnson says.

— By Vanessa Caceres



Martha McGill of Nemours Children's Health says a new collaboration with UCF will bolster pediatrician recruitment.



Michael Erhard is North Florida region president for Nemours.