

LURIE CENTER



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL



MassGeneral Hospital
for Children™

To the Friends of Ladders/Lurie –

I look forward to meeting the individual members of Friends of Ladders/Lurie (FOL) over the next several months but, in the meantime, am writing to briefly update you on new research initiatives at the Lurie Center.

First of all, I want to gratefully acknowledge that the establishment of the Lurie Center and my new director position is built upon the tremendous work over many years of Margaret Bauman, MD and FOL. The very existence of “Friends” is evidence of the great admiration and appreciation so many of you feel toward Dr. Bauman for her outstanding clinical care, research and teaching in autism spectrum disorders. Her years of tireless, dedicated effort – which continue today – combined with your support are what make the Lurie Center the strong organization that it is.

Since research can ultimately change the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), one of our goals for the Lurie Center is to build upon the current research at the Center. We plan to further expand Lurie Center initiatives to encompass what is frequently called translational research – “from bench to bedside” – the range of research from the laboratory scientists who focus on finding the genetic and other biological causes of ASDs to clinical medication trials that can have a more immediate impact on the daily lives of individuals with ASDs and their family members.

While there are many initiatives that we are already working on that are in preliminary stages, I want to share information on just two clinical research projects that should start early in 2012.

- Some children with ASDs have problems with overactivity, impulsiveness and distractibility. These behaviors are also seen in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Extended release guanfacine (Intuniv) is FDA-approved for the treatment of children with ADHD. The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether Intuniv is an effective treatment for these ADHD-like symptoms in children with ASDs (ages 5 – 14 years old) either by itself or in combination with methylphenidate (also known as Ritalin).
- One of the areas receiving very little attention in ASDs is that of anxiety. Anxiety is common in ASDs, but has not yet been fully characterized or studied. This trial will determine the effectiveness of mirtazapine, a medication for mood and anxiety disorders, for reducing anxiety in children (ages 5 – 17 years old) with ASDs.

I look forward to collaborating with FOL on many important projects, including research, and will share information regularly. Together we can build upon the great legacy of FOL and the Lurie Center and find new ways to improve the lives of both individuals with ASDs and of their families. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. McDougle, MD
Director
Lurie Center for Autism