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Lancaster General Health and Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital take first step toward broad pediatric partnership

HERSHEY, PA—Infants, children and young adults admitted as patients to Lancaster General Hospital now have onsite access to care from Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital pediatricians.

The service is part of a new pediatric hospitalist partnership between Lancaster General Health and Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and is the planned first step toward a broad partnership between the two healthcare providers to expand comprehensive pediatric specialty care for children and families in Lancaster County.

"The health and well-being of our community's children and their families are best advanced through a partnership that delivers comprehensive and compassionate pediatric care," said Thomas E. Beeman, Ph.D., FACHE, president and chief executive officer of Lancaster General Health. "With Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital as a partner, the opportunity to unite our resources and professional talents to benefit our infants and children is tremendous."

"As central Pennsylvania's children's hospital, our goal is provide the highest quality of pediatric care to patients and families as close to home as possible," said Harold L. Paz, M.D., Medical Center CEO, Penn State's senior vice president for health affairs and dean of Penn State College of Medicine. "It is extremely gratifying that through this emerging partnership we can complement the outstanding care provided by Lancaster General Health and extend the renowned services of Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital so that no child needs to leave the region for care of chronic, complex or even life-threatening health conditions."

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In early January, Penn State Hershey began providing short-term coverage of Lancaster General Hospital's pediatric inpatient unit through a group of eight pediatric hospitalists to augment the current physician staff working on the unit. All eight physicians are employed by Penn State Hershey and now have hospital privileges at Lancaster General Hospital. The physicians care for patients on the pediatric unit and also provide consultation for pediatric patients in LGH's emergency department.

Under the agreement, management and oversight of the pediatric hospitalist service will be conducted by Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital physician leadership effective July 1, 2012.

Collaborative discussions continue to assess what other pediatric specialty services may be developed in Lancaster County through an expanded partnership between Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital and Lancaster General Health. The initial focus for further collaboration is on several key pediatric services including cardiology, gastroenterology, psychiatry and pulmonary services. Joint initiatives related to specialty and sub-specialty care include inpatient consultation, ambulatory care and emergency department consultation.

Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital is part of Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Health System and consists of more than 150 pediatric medical and surgical specialists renowned in disciplines such as pediatric cancer, cardiology, orthopedics and critical care. Children's Hospital physicians are members of the Penn State College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics faculty and part of the 900-plus provider Penn State Hershey Medical Group. Children's Hospital doctors, nurses and staff care for more than 100,000 infants, children and young adults annually.

Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital has been recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of America's Best Children's Hospitals 2011-2012 in the areas of pediatric orthopedics and urology.

Lancaster General Health includes more than 60 healthcare locations throughout Lancaster County, including three hospitals, suburban and downtown outpatient pavilions, 10 outpatient centers, an urgent care center and retail clinics, and a network of about 30 primary and specialty-care physician practices. Keystone of the system is the 525-bed Lancaster General Hospital, a three-time Magnet-designated regional referral center for trauma, orthopedics, neurology and heart care that is among Pennsylvania's busiest hospitals.