



## Pediatric and Adult Congenital Heart Center

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### **Cleveland Clinic, Akron Children's expand pediatric and congenital heart collaboration**

**AKRON, Ohio (March 28, 2019)** - Cleveland Clinic and Akron Children's Hospital are expanding their affiliation agreement that began in 2014 to now encompass both organizations' pediatric and adult congenital heart programs.

When Cleveland Clinic and Akron Children's signed the initial agreement nearly five years ago, it brought together their pediatric cardiovascular surgeons and adult congenital cardiologists to collaborate on patient cases, share best practices and combine outcome data.

The affiliation now extends to all of pediatric cardiology and adult congenital cardiology – including clinical cardiology, imaging, interventional cardiology, and cardiothoracic surgery -

bringing together a combined 30 pediatric cardiologists and surgeons who specialize in children and adults with congenital heart disease.

The program, known as the Pediatric and Adult Congenital Heart Center, is led by Hani Najm, M.D., chair of Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery at Cleveland Clinic; Tess Saarel, M.D., chair of Pediatric Cardiology at Cleveland Clinic Children's; John Lane, M.D., director of Pediatric Cardiology and the Adult Congenital Heart Service at Akron Children's; and Robert Stewart, M.D., chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Akron Children's. Clinical administrative leads are Lars Svensson, M.D., Ph.D., chairman of the Sydell and Arnold Miller Family Heart and Vascular Institute at Cleveland Clinic, and John Crow, M.D., chairman of the Department of Surgery at Akron Children's.

"We are excited to expand the scope of our affiliation with Akron Children's to include all pediatric cardiac care," said Dr. Najm. "This unified program means that families throughout Northeast Ohio have access to the very best pediatric cardiac care close to home, including surgical care for the most serious and complex congenital heart defects."

The strength of the affiliation comes from the collaboration between the teams – one based at a health care system ranked No.1 in the world for adult cardiac care and one based at a nationally-ranked free-standing, independent children's hospital.

The entire team meets weekly to discuss cases, essentially giving patients an expanded "brain trust" of experienced pediatric cardiologists. Joint "on-call" schedules have been established and team members will share privileges at both hospitals.

"Our goal is creating a comprehensive and clinically-unified program between our two independent health systems," said Dr. Lane. "By working together, we can strengthen research and quality initiatives, improve operational efficiencies, and enhance opportunities in the areas of medical education and physician recruitment."

Patient families will have the option of getting their care at the location of their choice. Heart surgeries will continue to be performed at both Akron Children's main hospital campus in downtown Akron and the Cleveland Clinic's main campus in downtown Cleveland. Clinics will be offered as far south as Mansfield, as far north as Ashtabula, as far west as Norwalk and as far east as Youngstown, making affiliated pediatric cardiologists easily accessible to most Northern Ohio families without venturing far from home. The newest cardiology clinic just opened in Marietta.

Congenital heart disease, a type of defect in one or more structures of the heart or blood vessels, occurs in eight out of every 1,000 births. They range from simple defects that require no treatment to those that require multiple surgeries. But, with advances in fetal imaging and surgical interventions at birth and in early childhood that have continued to improve since the 1960s, more children born with congenital heart defects are not only surviving but thriving into adulthood.

The Pediatric and Adult Congenital Center has expertise to follow those patients, whose needs are different than those with heart disease associated with the aging process, throughout their lives. Living with congenital heart disease requires special attention to even the most ordinary life events and medical procedures, such as a pregnancy or dental visit. The center offers patients with congenital heart disease comprehensive diagnostics, lifestyle counseling, medical

management and interventional and surgical treatment for the full spectrum of conditions related to congenital heart disease.

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### **About Akron Children's Hospital**

Ranked among the best children's hospitals by U.S. News & World Report, Akron Children's Hospital is the fastest growing children's hospital in the U.S. according to Modern Healthcare. We own and operate two pediatric hospitals in northeast Ohio and more than 80 primary and subspecialty care locations. We have the second busiest emergency department in the state and perform more pediatric surgeries than any other hospital in northeast Ohio. With more than 800,000 patient visits each year, we've been leading the way to healthier futures for children and communities through expert medical care, prevention and wellness programs since 1890. Learn more at [akronchildrens.org](http://akronchildrens.org).

### **About Cleveland Clinic**

Cleveland Clinic is a nonprofit multispecialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Located in Cleveland, Ohio, it was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of cooperation, compassion and innovation. Cleveland Clinic has pioneered many medical breakthroughs, including coronary artery bypass surgery and the first face transplant in the United States. *U.S. News & World Report* consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. Among Cleveland Clinic's 66,000 employees are more than 4,200 salaried physicians and researchers and 16,600 nurses, representing 140 medical specialties and subspecialties. Cleveland Clinic's health system includes a 165-acre main campus near downtown Cleveland, 16 regional hospitals (11 in Ohio, five in Florida), more than 150 northern Ohio outpatient locations – including 18 full-service family health centers and three health and wellness centers – and locations in Las Vegas, Nev.; Toronto, Canada; Abu Dhabi, UAE; and London, England. In 2018, there were 7.9 million total outpatient visits, 238,000 hospital admissions and observations and 220,000 surgical cases throughout Cleveland Clinic's health system. Patients came for treatment from every state and 185 countries. Visit us at [clevelandclinic.org](http://clevelandclinic.org). Follow us at [twitter.com/ClevelandClinic](https://twitter.com/ClevelandClinic). News and resources available at [newsroom.clevelandclinic.org](http://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org).

**Editor's Note:** [Cleveland Clinic News Service](#) is available to provide broadcast-quality interviews and B-roll upon request.