In essence, the heart is rebuilt so one ventricle can perform the work of the entire heart, compensating for the malformation. The University of Chicago is one of only two hospitals in the United States offering this less invasive, highly effective treatment for children.

"Initially," says Dr. Bacha, "we were only using hybrid surgery on high-risk patients and using the standard Norwood method for the low-risk cases. But the hybrid technique has proven so successful that it has replaced the Norwood method for use with newborns at the University of Chicago Children's Hospital. Seven of the eight babies on whom the hybrid technique has been used have survived,

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entirely different approach and understanding than adult gastroenterologists," Dr. Kirschner says. "We consider growth, psychological and physical development, and nutritional factors very much a part of chronic disease in children. We have a much greater armamentarium of therapeutic agents than ever before, many of which reduce the risk of complications from long-term corticosteroid use."

Dr. Kirschner is excited that the new Comer Children's Hospital will support the latest advances in medical care and provide greater comfort and better amenities for patients and their families. "Many of our patients have long hospital stays," she says.

Stefano Guandalini, MD, Section Chief of Pediatric Gastroenterology/Hepatology and Nutrition, and Director of the University of Chicago's Celiac Disease Program, has defined the standard for the diagnosis and treatment of celiac disease through guidelines used by physicians the world over. Celiac disease is triggered by consumption of dietary gluten in wheat, rye and barley and the primary treatment is through diet.

"The diagnosis of celiac disease is often missed," says Dr. Guandalini. "The symptoms are different in children and in adults. While children tend to have very easily observable symptoms, physicians sometimes mistakenly attribute these symptoms to other causes."

Over the past three years, the Celiac Disease Program has tested more than 1,000 people with suspected celiac disease, with 371 people from seven states coming last year alone for the free blood test. The diagnostic blood tests – which need to be performed by an experienced laboratory – determine whether patients need a biopsy in order to diagnose the disease. "Celiac disease is slightly more common than Alzheimer's disease, yet so little awareness exists," says Dr. Guandalini.
Pediatric Heart Specialists
Pioneer New Hybrid Procedure

The hybrid surgery team – echocardiographer, surgeon and interventional cardiologist – works together at the same time to rebuild the heart of a newborn with hypoplastic left heart syndrome.

compared with Norwood surgery, which has up to a 20-30% mortality rate."

"One of the advantages of the new Comer Children's Hospital now under construction," says Dr. Hijazi, "is being able to custom design 'hybrid' facilities: a cardiac catheterization lab with appropriate surgical equipment, and an operating room with appropriate catheterization equipment." Comer will also have the latest imaging tools, including flat-panel imaging tubes used in conjunction with tables that can be placed in any position for patients who have congenital heart malformations.

"With the flat panel, we'll be able to move the tubes in ways we cannot achieve with a regular fluoroscopy machine," says Dr. Hijazi. "That way we will get the same quality image whether our patient weighs 150 or 350 pounds. We will also get higher quality images and reduce radiation exposure for our patients."

"Another decided plus for us in the new Children's Hospital will be a 10-bed pediatric cardiac intensive care unit," says Dr. Bacha. "And we will, of course, continue to have a team of doctors, specialized nurses, technicians and respiratory therapists dedicated to the cardiac patient. A fully focused team such as this greatly enhances patient care."

Watch for the Opening of Chicago's Newest Pediatric Hospital

The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital, scheduled to open in the months ahead, will have all the advanced technology necessary to providing the finest medical care to young patients.

"The new hospital will be kid-friendly and family-centered," says Herbert T. Abelson, MD, George M. Eisenberg Professor and Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Chicago. "The physical structure is spectacular. It's going to have wonderful visual aspects and will be an educational place for kids, not just a hospital.

"The patient rooms have comfortable pull-out beds and sleeper chairs for families to sleep in the room with their youngsters," says Dr. Abelson. "And the neonatal intensive care unit, where there isn't room for a pull-out bed, will have separate sleeping rooms right on the same floor for families. Families can be close to their children."

The rooms will also have the latest computer technology, with flat-screen sets and links to an entertainment-information system. "The children will have access to e-mail and chat rooms and will be able to communicate with their schools," says Dr. Abelson.

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The $130 million, 242,000-square-foot Comer Children's Hospital, situated across the street from the current Children's Hospital, will feature the latest in technology as well as a setting designed to help make children and their families feel as comfortable as possible.

"In the new Comer Children's Hospital, the transport between the child's room and the operating room will be significantly shorter than it is now," says Donald C. Liu, MD, PhD, Associate Professor and Chief of Pediatric Surgery at the University of Chicago Children's Hospital. "This will be a decided benefit because the most important thing for children going into surgery is being able to see their loved ones immediately before and after. It makes everything far less fearful for them.

"The Comer Hospital fulfills the dream of becoming the beacon for the South Side as well as for children everywhere," says Dr. Liu. "Beyond the kid-friendly environment, the new hospital will have state-of-the-art medical care."

SAVE THE DATE
Oct. 14, 2004
Pediatric Day
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The University of Chicago Hospitals