



Summer 2009

THE CHILDREN'S IBD CENTER AT MOUNT SINAI NEWSLETTER



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Please join us:

Team IBD Kids is running in the ING New York City Marathon to raise funds and awareness of IBD in Children and teens. Please come and cheer on Team IBD Kids on Sunday November 1st in front of the hospital on Fifth Avenue. To make a contribution to Team IBD Kids go to www.active.com/donate/TeamIBDKids2009

This edition of the newsletter was created with the help of High School Interns working at The IBD Center—We thank Daniel & Gayle for all their hard work!

Back to School

By Daniel Zimmerman

There are very few phrases that frighten kids as much as “back to school.” Everyone hates watching TV in the summer and seeing a commercial for school supplies – it really puts a damper on one of the best times of year. But, as summer is ending and the new school year approaches, school and the stress it causes must be considered, especially in terms of IBD. The truth of the matter is that there are ways to make the school year less stressful and more enjoyable. Those with IBD have even more anxiety when it comes to school, but there are many ways to manage IBD while in the classroom. The first piece of advice, is the importance of communicating with your teachers. Contrary to the media's portrayal of teachers as inaccessible and rude (look no further than “Hey Arnold” or “Saved by the Bell”), teachers are a student's number one resource. I remember when I missed a month of school for my surgery, my teachers made themselves available every day after to school to ensure that I would not fall behind. When I went to the bathroom and came back fifteen minutes later, I was not put in the awkward position of explaining why I was gone for so long, because they knew about my disease. Teachers are generally understanding of your condition and will take into consideration any allowances you may need during the school year. If you take one

thing away from this article, it should be this: communication with teachers is absolutely essential. Along the same lines, I would recommend that you immediately seek out the school nurse and establish some sort of bathroom system. Explain that the dirty school bathrooms are not at all conducive to your well-being, and that your only option is to use the bathroom in the nurse's office. Besides the obvious advantage of using a clean bathroom, there will never be any questions about your whereabouts because the nurse will have them documented. Additionally, do not be embarrassed to use extra time, an elevator pass, or anything else that is guaranteed to you because of your IBD. It can be extremely helpful, and this will lend itself to decreasing the anxiety of school. To close, I'll take a page out of my doctor's book. It is of the utmost importance to take your medication every day. Given the fact that many children don't listen to their parents, skipped doses of medication are a huge issue. Unfortunately, this can only lead to getting a flare-up, and there is no point in getting sick and missing school, because this can affect your grades negatively. If you take your medication, you are helping your body fight off your IBD, and becoming healthy is what every kid wants. Work hard; communicate with your teachers and other adults in school, take your meds, and you'll be surprised to find that being back to school is really not as bad as it may seem.

Interview with Dr. Dunkin

By Daniel Zimmerman

I first met Doctor David Dunkin three years ago when he was a young pediatric fellow fresh from his training as a pediatrician. He was beginning his fellowship at Mount Sinai and I was beginning my two-month hospital stay for another flare-up of my IBD. Due to the fact that I happened to be one of the more charismatic patients on the floor, I hit it off with Dr. Dunkin immediately. Fast forward three years, fellow Dunkin is now an attending and I am now a senior in high school volunteering at the Children's IBD Center at Mount Sinai. I decided to interview the newly appointed attending physician on his motives for choosing a career in medicine, his advice for those seeking careers in health care, and his favorite movies.

Daniel Zimmerman: It's nice to see you again fellow, or should I say doctor, Dunkin.

David Dunkin: (laughs) You too, Daniel, how's life?

DZ: Pretty good. My portfolio is looking solid.

DD: (laughs) Yeah, you should check out this company called General Motors, I think it's a great investment.

DZ: As good as Enron?

DD: Not quite, but almost.

DZ: I'll check it out (laughs). You should probably stick to your day job though. Speaking of which, why did you become a doctor?

DD: When I was ten years old my father passed away. Right then, I made up my mind that I wanted to understand the medical reasoning behind this. My goal was to one day be able to prevent other kids from facing the trauma that I had to endure.

DZ: I am sorry to hear that. Why did you decide to specialize in gastroenterology rather than other fields?

DD: With gastro patients you build a bond. You see them three to four times a year and keep a running

dialogue with them about their current disposition and medications. I see the patient grow from a sickly kid to a healthy, happy adolescent. In other fields, the relationship is a lot less personal.

DZ: Why did you choose pediatric gastro as opposed to adult gastro?

DD: With children, I can see them grow and mature and it gives me a great sense of satisfaction to realize that I really did help them.

DZ: As far as diagnosis, in your experience when does IBD usually manifest itself?

DD: The most common age in children is the teens and for adults in the early thirties or in their 60-70's (if the disease didn't present itself when the individual was younger).

DZ: There is a lot of speculation over the cause of Crohn's and the ways in which individuals inherit the disease. Can you clear some of this up for us?

DD: Several theories exist about what causes Crohn's disease, but none have been completely proven yet. There appears to be an interaction between genetic factors, the immune system and environmental factors. The most popular theory is that the body's immune system reacts abnormally in people with Crohn's disease, mistaking bacteria, foods, and other substances as foreign substances. The immune system's response is to attack these intruders. During this process, white blood cells accumulate in the lining of the intestines, producing chronic inflammation, which leads to ulcerations and bowel injury.

DZ: I see. Do you have any advice for those who aspire to have careers in medicine?

DD: I'd say the single most important thing I learned on my journey to becoming a doctor was the value of curiosity. When you're having your yearly checkups ask questions. Ask why one's white blood cell count is important, why new flu vaccines are created each year. Never be afraid to ask questions.

DZ: Ok, what are some of your hobbies?

DD: During my rare free time, I enjoy hiking, mountain biking, sailing, kayaking, and going to the movies.

DZ: Favorite movies?

DD: Hmm, I really liked that Pixar

movie about the robot, Wall-E. I love The Matrix and James Cameron's The Abyss has always been a favorite of mine.

DZ: I'm more of a Terminator guy but I can't argue with the Matrix.

DD: Of course. Tell me what you think of GM.

DZ: (laughs) Will do.

David Dunkin grew up in Long Island and attended Cornell University for his undergraduate studies. He then went to the Sackler School of Medicine and Yale to complete his graduate work and residency requirements. Aside from his daily doctoral duties on the floor, Dr. Dunkin is actively engaged in research at The Mount Sinai Medical Center. As this goes to print, he is working on a study on the possible medicinal effects of Chinese herbs on inflammatory bowel diseases.

Herbal Medicine & IBD

Dr. Xiu-Min Li, MD, Director of the Center for Chinese Herbal Therapy for Allergy & Asthma and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Mount Sinai Hospital, has been investigating the use of an Herbal Formula that she and her colleagues discovered called Food Allergy Herbal Formula (FAHF-2) for peanut allergy and asthma. In a research study, Dr. Li and her colleagues discovered that FAHF-2 completely prevented severe allergic reactions to peanuts for up to six months. Dr. Li is presently conducting a clinical study using FAHF-2 to treat children and adults with food allergies and adults with asthma. "We believe that FAHF-2 returns the immune responses to food toward a more normal state without overall immune suppression," and that "FAHF-2 may work for peanut allergy because it produces an immunomodulatory effect". It is this immunomodulatory effect, without the overall immune suppression, that has sparked the Children's IBD Center to collaborate with Dr. Li in our initial FAHF-2 study. Since many of the currently used

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medications used to treat IBD also work on the immune system, we are always looking for novel treatments that will potentially prevent the immune system from causing the intestinal inflammation associated with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, while not making the child vulnerable to infection or other potentially serious side effects caused by immunomodulating medications. FAHF-2 looks extremely promising in doing this.

Together with Dr. Li and her researchers, we are presently testing FAHF-2 on the blood of recently diagnosed children and young adults with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. All of these patients have given consent for an additional sample of blood to be taken at the time of a routine blood test. Researchers are testing to see if FAHF-2 reduces inflammatory cells in these blood samples. Initial results have shown that it has a lot of potential to aid in IBD. The Children's IBD Center is hoping to secure funding to further investigate this Herbal Formula in IBD.

A Crohn's Story

By Gayle Geschwind

When I was six years old, my life changed drastically. I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease after several months of unpleasant symptoms and medical tests. This diagnosis hugely impacted my life, and eleven years later, I can say that I have learned a great deal from having this disease. The main symptoms I get from having Crohn's

are stomach and joint pains. However, I overcame the limitations that my disease caused; while I could not participate in gym most of the time, I could read – and this opened up a whole new world of possibility for me. Reading became my way of dealing with the pain from Crohn's, and it still helps me to this day. When I came home from school, exhausted with the effort I had put forth in trying to learn while feeling unwell, I would collapse in my bed with a book – and I would always begin to feel better.

Slowly, my medication began to work; I was no longer tired all the time, and my stomach pains began to fade. Unfortunately, by the time I was 12, my symptoms came back, and I had one of the worst flare-ups of my life. One year later, I had a resection, and now I feel great. I had an amazing doctor who made sure that everything went perfectly, and the surgery was the best thing that happened to me. Nearly all of the symptoms I had before it were gone. It was around this time that I decided that I wanted to become a doctor, in order to help people like my doctor had helped me.

I will be a senior in high school next year, and my plans for college and my career have been greatly affected by my illness. I spend time during the school year volunteering for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, and I spent my summer helping out at Mt. Sinai's Children's IBD Center. So many aspects of my life have been influenced by my disease, and I know that having Crohn's has made me a stronger person.

Common Questions

My daughter has Crohn's disease and is a freshman in high school. She often feels sick in the morning with stomach aches and does not want to go to school, but she feels better by mid-morning. What should I do?

Some individuals with IBD do have more symptoms in the morning when they first wake up. Often they start to feel better as they start their routine, use the bathroom and eat breakfast. It's important to talk to your daughter and, if you both agree, to the school, to work out a morning routine that works for her and her studies. For example, schedule non-academic classes early in the morning, so your daughter can take the academic subjects later in the day when she may be feeling better & able to attend school. Furthermore, discuss her disease with her teachers, because they can help alleviate her stress.

Does IBD ever go away?

IBD is a chronic condition, so you always have IBD, but this does not mean that you will always feel sick. Like many chronic conditions, there is a large spectrum of severity and the disease can wax & wane over time. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are both inflammatory bowel diseases, but Crohn's disease can affect any area of the gastrointestinal tract, whereas ulcerative colitis is limited to the rectum and colon. For some children & teenagers where medicine is not able to control the inflammation of IBD, surgery to remove the affected area may be an option. For those with ulcerative colitis, if the rectum and colon are removed, then you no longer have colitis because there is no colon.

IBDKids Shop

Please consider supporting the IBD Center by purchasing tribute cards or baseball hats.

If you are interested in purchasing a Team IBDKids hat (\$25 each) or IBD Center Tribute cards (\$10 each or 11 for \$100) please email childrenIBD@mssm.edu or call 212-241-5415



Can You think of creative ways to support The Children's IBD Center? Targeted grant money, donations to our existing programs and your ideas and participation all help. Please contact us at childrenIBD@mssm.edu to discuss your ideas and help support our work.

Internships: Is your High School or College age student looking for an internship? Internships are available at The Children's IBD Center. Minimum 6-8 hours a week. Contact 212-241-5415 or childrenIBD@mssm.edu for more information.

We want to hear from you:

To contact us or to receive updated information about Center events, please contact us:

E-MAIL: ChildrenIBD@mssm.edu

PHONE: 212-241-5415

WEB SITE: www.IBDKids.org

The Children's IBD Center at Mount Sinai is funded solely through philanthropy. Please contact us if you are interested in making a contribution to support our Center or in learning about other ways that you can help.



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Resources for Families:

www.IBDKids.org

www.CCFA.org

www.medlineplus.gov

The Children's IBD Center at Mount Sinai offers the following services for families:

Regular lectures where you can learn more about the disease and meet other families & Center staff

IBDChat, an interactive group for kids with IBD & their siblings

IBD Parent Chat, A support group for parents by parents

A website of resources for families
www.IBDKids.org