

With Gratitude: A Reflection on the Lifetime Achievements of Dr. Nemr Eid



by KIMBERLY BOLAND MD, FAAP



In the last 40 years, cystic fibrosis (CF) has become one of the most remarkable stories in modern medicine. CF has transformed from a disease that was almost always fatal in early childhood to a condition where life expectancy may be near normal for most newborns diagnosed today due to advanced therapeutics.

It was not until

1989 that the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator gene was described, and it was not until the 1990s that the first wave of CF specific medications would start to revolutionize the treatment of the disease. These medical advances, however, would not have had such a dramatic impact without the clinical leadership of individuals like Dr. Nemr Eid, the founder of the University of Louisville Division of Pediatric Pulmonology.

Dr. Nemr Eid joined the faculty at UofL in 1988. After his fellowship, he was hired as the sole pediatric pulmonologist and was tasked with establishing the division and founding an accredited CF center. At that time, many patients with CF received their care elsewhere as there was no pediatric pulmonologist on staff.

Working with the Children's Hospital and the Department of Pediatrics, Dr. Eid quickly established a weekly multidisciplinary CF clinic. Dr. Eid eventually assembled his team including a clinical

geneticist (Dr. Joseph Hersh), a psychologist (Dr. Bryan Carter), a nurse practitioner (Martha Eddy), as well as a respiratory therapist, social worker and nutritionist. Dr. Garrett Adams, the Chief of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, also helped him staff the clinic for the first couple of years. Every Tuesday, this dedicated team began caring for children with CF across the Commonwealth. Within a few short years, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (CFF) accredited this CF center on their very first on-site visit.

Under Dr. Eid's leadership, the UofL CF Center has continued as an accredited center for over 30 years and has received multiple national accolades. In 2006, the CF Foundation (CFF) recognized the UofL Pediatric CF center as one of five benchmark centers in the U.S. after outcomes data proved that CF patients ages 6-17 who received care at UofL matched or surpassed the top 10 pediatric CF centers in the country. The Division of Pediatric Pulmonology was recognized by *US News and World Report* in 2010 as one of the top pediatric pulmonary programs in the country by achieving a rank of the 26th best program in the nation—a remarkable feat given the small size of the division. Under Dr. Eid's leadership, the CF center has continued to grow. Today, with the support of the Children's Hospital Foundation, the CFF, and local grass root organizations such as Cure CF, the CF center has been fortunate to add additional personnel to ensure full time support for the growing num-

ber of patients. Currently working in the pediatric CF center are four physicians, two nurses, two respiratory therapists, one nutritionist, one social worker and one pharmacist. Furthermore, the CF center has also increased its research footprint as a member of the CF Therapeutics and Development Network.

The accomplishments of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology continued as Dr. Eid grew the division. Dr. Ronald Morton joined him in 1998, and they continued the crusade to establish a state-of-the-art division with their limited staffing. Dr. Morton took over the directorship of the pediatric rehabilitation unit and reached out to the Home of the Innocents, a pediatric long-term facility, where he established the first chronic mechanical ventilator unit for pediatrics in Kentucky. Later Dr. Morton expanded pediatric pulmonary care to Evansville, Indiana, where he still travels monthly. Dr. Adrian O'Hagan joined the division in 2010 from Phoenix Children's Hospital, bringing expertise in both pediatric and adult CF care with his background in internal medicine and pediatrics.

In 2013, the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology reached another milestone when the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education approved the start of a pediatric pulmonology fellowship program, the first in Kentucky. Dr. Eid served as its first program director for four years before passing the helm to Dr. O'Hagan. Dr. Eid oversaw the training of the first pediatric pulmonology fellow, Dr. Scott Bickel, who graduated from the program in 2016 and subsequently joined the Division as the fourth faculty member. Dr. Bickel has contributed tremendously to the growth of the division in many areas including translational research, medical education and outstanding patient care. In addition, he has served as the medical director of the Respiratory Therapy Department at Norton Children's Hospital since 2020, a task passed to him by Dr. Eid who had established the first modern pediatric pulmonary function laboratory in Kentucky in 1988. The fifth faculty member, Dr. Erica Stevens, joined the Division in 2020 from Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and has contributed to the further growth of the division with her interest in neonatal respiratory diseases and primary ciliary dyskinesia.

While Dr. Eid has remained passionate about clinical care, he stayed active in academic endeavors, earning the rank of tenured Professor of Pediatrics in 2000. He authored over 200 journal articles, abstracts, book chapters and monographs related to respiratory



Left to right, Dr. Mark Eid, Nata Eid, Dr. Sabine Eid, Dr. Nemr Eid, and Dr. Ryan Eid.

health. He also pioneered many national and international educational initiatives related to childhood asthma, infantile wheezing and other pulmonary conditions. Over his 35-year career, Dr. Eid remained focused on medical education and trained hundreds of pediatric residents and three pediatric pulmonology fellows. Dr. Eid's influence on these physicians continues to impact children throughout Kentucky and the region. Also, as the Director for the Pediatric Pulmonology Board Review Course (a joint program supported by the American College of Chest Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics) for over 10 years, Dr. Eid's imprint on the education of hundreds of board-certified pulmonologists throughout the nation is a notable distinction.

As Dr. Eid prepares for retirement, he feels grateful to have had the privilege and honor to serve UofL and Norton Children's Hospital for 35 years. What began in 1988 as a Division of Pediatric Pulmonology with one dedicated physician has grown to a division of six physicians which supports an active fellowship program and provides outstanding care to children across the state. Dr. Morton, who was instrumental in helping shape the Division with Dr. Eid over the years, now serves as the current Chief. With the Division now under Dr. Morton's leadership and again just ranked as a top program nationally by *US News and World Report* in 2022, Dr. Eid leaves knowing full well that the Division he established is in excellent standing and will continue his legacy for decades to come. 🌸

Dr. Boland is a Professor and Chair of Pediatrics at the University of Louisville School of Medicine and also serves as Chief of Staff at Norton Children's Hospital.