

# Nemours Children's Health Announces New Ear, Hearing and Communications Center

*Comprehensive center combines subspecialty areas to help patients with ear abnormalities and hearing loss*

Orlando, Fla. (Jan. 23, 2023) Nemours Children's Health announces a new interdisciplinary center that will aid patients dealing with a range of issues around deafness and ear reconstruction, specifically those with ear differences, hearing loss and communications needs.

This new center at Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida, the [Nemours Children's Ear, Hearing and Communications Center \(NEHCC\)](#) is designed to integrate the care of doctors, hearing and communication professionals (audiologists and speech pathologists), as well as genetics experts, psychologists and developmental pediatric professionals, with the goal to identify, manage and treat, both medically and surgically, children who have a range of ear differences and hearing problems.

This center involves two areas: the Nemours Children's Interdisciplinary Center for Comprehensive Ear Reconstruction (NICEAR) directed by Angelo A. Leto Barone, M.D., and the Nemours Children's Hearing Enhancement, Augmentation and Restoration Program (NHEAR), directed by Cedric V. Pritchett, M.D., M.P.H.

"As a comprehensive ear rehabilitation center, Nemours Children's Health will provide ear reconstruction and hearing loss restoration," said Adela Casas-Melley, M.D., pediatric surgeon and chair of surgery at Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida. "Our team's experience extends to all types of ear abnormalities, including microtia and atresia, and patients will be able to see multiple specialists on the same day, decreasing the burden of multiple specialty visits often needed by these patients."

Unique in that it involves coordinated and integrated care within one setting, the NEHCC will build on Nemours strengths in treating children with inner ear dysfunction and deafness, middle ear difficulties that impact their speech and hearing, and will add innovative surgical techniques to reconstruct outer ear abnormalities.

The Ear, Hearing and Communications Center will offer a comprehensive approach to the treatment of these complex patients, from audiologic evaluation to correctly identify and assess the degree of hearing loss to a microtia-focused pediatric plastic surgery team for those born with ear differences and concerns about appearance and personal image, pediatric otologic evaluation and surgery for middle ear reconstruction or inner ear hearing restoration; speech and pathology assessment to investigate common speech problems, and supportive services to help patients cope with psychological concerns associated with ear pathology. The center will utilize geneticists to understand causes of ear abnormalities and hearing loss and will conduct research to study the genes involved in hearing loss.

In Florida, an average of 270 children were born each year from 2017 to 2020 with permanent hearing loss, ranging from mild to profound.

"Children with ear differences may have a wide range of associated problems in addition to hearing loss, including balance, speech and language, emotional stability and self-esteem challenges. This is why coordinated care is essential," said Dr. Pritchett, pediatric otolaryngologist at Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida. "At Nemours, our specialists help children with these needs develop holistically through advanced treatments and extensive support, all in one place.

"Microtia and all ear differences are often overlooked, but they represent a significant physical and psychological burden for these children due to inability to wear glasses or a mask," said Dr. Leto Barone, craniofacial and pediatric plastic surgeon who recently joined Nemours and brought his long-standing vision for the development of the center, now underway.

"In addition, they often have underlying conditions such as speech problems that warrant investigation and should not be neglected," he added. "Most ear difference often causes significant distress, and we hear parents mentioning these children are ridiculed or bullied, and this is cause for significant social and psychological discomfort. We envision an 'ear hub' in which patients with microtia and atresia will be at center of integrated interdisciplinary care, in order to treat the patient holistically. The NEHCC will work to provide excellent care, but also aim to find innovative solutions to restoring the child's ear and hearing so they can feel 'whole' again. I am excited for this new chapter and what we can bring to the children of Florida and beyond."



To learn more, visit [Ear, Hearing & Communication Center, Florida \(nemours.org\)](#)

## About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit [Nemours.org](https://nemours.org).

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Additional assets available online:  [Photos \(1\)](#)  [Video \(1\)](#)

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