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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UWM, Children's Research Institute and the Medical College receive \$8.5 million for children's environmental health research

MILWAUKEE — The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM), Children's Research Institute and the Medical College of Wisconsin have been awarded an \$8.5 million federal grant to combine their individual areas of expertise to form a national research powerhouse in the area of children's environmental health.

The Children's Environmental Health Science Core Center (EHSCC) is the only such center in the country devoted solely to this field and is unique in its broad, team-based approach.

The five-year funding is provided by the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). The highly competitive award will provide, enhance and create special infrastructure to support research projects focused on children's environmental health. It also will provide resources to link research with community needs through outreach and education.

“Issues such as asthma, lead poisoning, and toxic chemicals left behind at industrial sites disproportionately affect children in urban areas like Milwaukee,” says Milwaukee Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “This center will allow all of us who care about the health of today's youth, and future generations, to access cutting-edge research, technology and creative community-wide solutions to environmental health issues.”

David Petering, Ph.D., UWM Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, is the Director of the new center. Ronald Hines, Ph.D., Associate Director of Children's Research Institute and Professor of Pediatrics at the Medical College, has been named Deputy Director. Gail McCarver, M.D., pediatric neonatologist and clinical pharmacologist at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and Professor of Pediatrics at the Medical College, is Clinical Director.

Using zebrafish and other aquatic organisms as biomedical models, a long-standing, federally funded toxicology research program at UWM headed by Petering has conducted studies that address health issues such as lead exposure in children, the effects of mercury in children who eat large amounts of fish, and cellular repair mechanisms in developing central nervous systems.

Children's Research Institute contributes the human health clinical and translational component for the research of the new center. Its researchers specialize in cardiovascular birth defects, gene-environment interactions, and community health.

“Better understanding childhood disease and working toward prevention in metropolitan Milwaukee are very high priorities for our university and our many academic and clinical partners,” said UWM Chancellor Carlos E. Santiago. “This center, with its inter-institutional membership, will both serve as one of the research anchors in our new UWM School of

Public Health and be a resource for professionals involved in children's health issues here and across the country."

"This is a great example of organizations collaborating to enhance the health care of our children and their families," said Ellis D. Avner, M.D., Director of Children's Research Institute and Professor of Pediatrics and Physiology and Associate Dean, Research, at the Medical College. "With this grant, we'll combine the expertise of both institutions to understand how our environment directly affects child health and development, and translate that knowledge into prevention and new therapies."

The Children's EHSCC includes outreach initiatives designed to build the environmental health competency of educators and health professionals, increase the environmental health literacy of ethnic communities and foster the training of physician scientists in the area of children's environmental health.

In addition, the center will award annual pilot project grants to stimulate new research ideas. Six grants have already been given to study topics like the effects of water-borne pollutants on cardiac birth defects and potential links between the release of untreated sewage into area surface waters and diarrhea in children.

Plans are being made to house the administration of the Children's EHSCC in the UWM School of Public Health. Currently three additional faculty members are being recruited to join the planned UWM School of Public Health and the Children's EHSCC.

For more information go to: http://www4.uwm.edu/cehsc/outreach/public_health.html.

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