

RUTGERS ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON MEDICAL SCHOOL

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Hudson Shea Foundation Creates Research Fund to Support Study into Causes of Pregnancy and Early Infant Loss

The inaugural Hudson Shea Stella Faith Research Award will support the work of Derek Sant'Angelo, PhD, of the Child Health Institute of New Jersey

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ -- Offering hope is the ultimate goal of two New Jersey families whose foundation has partnered with the state's only facility solely dedicated to researching the underlying scientific causes of pediatric illness. Inspired to help parents grieving the loss of infant children and to prevent pregnancy loss and early infant mortality, the [Hudson Shea Foundation](#) donated \$100,000 to the [Child Health Institute of New Jersey](#) at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, creating the Hudson Shea Stella Faith Research Fund in support of research that examines the potential causes of late pregnancy loss, preterm birth, perinatal and neonatal disorders and early infant death.

"The relationship between the Child Health Institute and the Hudson Shea Foundation is a dream come true for Canaan and I. Our families, along with all of those families who support the foundation are integral in the success of the partnership between our organizations. We are pleased to have Dr. Sant'Angelo receive the first of many grants to ensure that children across the world can live and have fruitful lives," said Adam Yoskowitz, one of the co-founders of the Hudson Shea Foundation along with Canaan Himmelbaum.

Announced in late September, the first Hudson Shea Stella Faith Research Award will support the work of Derek Sant'Angelo, PhD, the Harold L. Paz, MD, Endowed Professor of Developmental Biology, and professor of Pediatrics and Pharmacology, whose laboratory has been studying a key gene that appears to control a large number of immune cell functions allowing infants to fight infections, despite having no built-up immunity.

"The immune system is intriguing as it has the ability to learn over time, remembering what pathogens our body is exposed to and developing a process to fight them when we are exposed again during our lifetime," explained Dr. Sant'Angelo. "Infants are more susceptible to potentially deadly viruses and bacteria because their bodies have not had enough time to develop the antibodies needed to fight infections. We are grateful to the Hudson Shea Foundation for its support, which will help us to examine the molecular function of neonatal immune cells, how they respond to attacks on the immune system and what makes their response different from the function of adult cells."

According to Dr. Sant'Angelo, learning how immune cells behave differently in infants could help scientists understand what infections babies are more vulnerable to, which may be used to develop innovative new testing and treatment options. Specifically, the grant will allow Dr. Sant'Angelo's laboratory to profile 96 genes in 96 individual cells that are part of specific family of proteins known as BTB-ZF, providing a snapshot of the different kinds of immune cells present in a baby at the time of birth. The investigators will use the snapshot to isolate potentially unique immune cells in infants and then study how they operate to fight infections.

Funds to support the grant were raised through the Hudson Shea Foundation's annual Angel Walk. Held for the third year in a row in September, the walk is the foundation's largest annual fundraising event, honoring all lost babies and raising awareness of the need for perinatal and neonatal support services to grieving parents after pregnancy and infant loss. Donor contributions from the Angel Walk and other fundraising efforts allow the Hudson Shea Foundation to expand support services, as well as fund medical research for scientific advancements relating to pregnancy loss, prematurity, and neonatal health issues through the Hudson Shea Stella Faith Research Fund.

“The Hudson Shea Foundation is a model grassroots foundation which works to comfort grieving families through provision of critical support services. Additionally, the research funds provided by the generous support of the Hudson Shea Stella Faith Research Fund, offer hope that scientific discovery into neonatal development can prevent the tragedy of infant loss for future generations of families,” said Arnold B. Rabson, MD, director of the Child Health Institute of New Jersey and Laura Gallagher Endowed Chair of Developmental Biology and, professor of Pediatrics, Pharmacology, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “We are proud of our partnership with the Hudson Shea Foundation and grateful to the Yoskowitz and Himmelbaum families for their continued support of our research.”

The Child Health Institute of New Jersey, established in 1998 by Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is a research institute focused on understanding the causes and mechanisms of childhood diseases and to translate research discoveries into prevention, treatment and cure. It is part of the larger pediatric academic health campus in New Brunswick, NJ, that includes the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's Department of Pediatrics and Pediatric Clinical Research Center, as well as the adjoining Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, and PSE&G Children's Specialized Hospital. The Child Health Institute has four major research programs in childhood diseases in the areas of inflammation, immune and infectious diseases of childhood; neurodevelopment and autism; pediatric cancers and stem cells; and childhood obesity and metabolism.

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