

Children's hospital advocates to close the gap in pediatric heart care

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Ochsner Children's Hospital, ranked among the top hospitals in the nation for pediatric cardiology and congenital heart surgery, is raising awareness of the need for more pediatric-specific heart devices.

As the only pediatric heart transplant program in Louisiana and the only program in the state to offer advanced mechanical support options for [pediatric cardiology](#) patients, Ochsner Children's Hospital is committed to advocating for additional medical devices to enhance its high-quality care to pediatric patients awaiting transplants.

Adult heart patients benefit from numerous specialized devices for their cardiac needs, many of which allow them to rest at home while awaiting a [heart transplant](#). However, the pediatric field faces a tough reality: only one [ventricular assist device](#) (VAD) with FDA approval for long-term use in infants and young children. This VAD, created in the 1980s, requires patients to remain hospitalized for their cardiac support needs.

Older children and teenagers can receive cardiac support using devices created for adults, which allows them to return home and go back to school. However, there is a notable gap in device options for infants and young children with end stage heart failure. Although tools for the youngest heart patients are limited, the Ochsner Children's Hospital team provides top-of-the-line care to bridge patients safely to transplant and hope for a better quality of life.

In America, pediatric heart failure results in more than 14,000 hospitalizations annually, outnumbering pediatric cancer. Yet, research and innovation in this field has not kept pace. There is a great need for more funded research to study novel ways to care for pediatric patients, instead of managing and treating their heart failure with just a few device options or adaptations of adult treatments.

To raise awareness of this issue, Ochsner Children's Hospital has teamed up with 66 prominent medical institutions across the country through the Advanced Cardiac Therapies Improving Outcomes Network (ACTION). This collaboration seeks to increase the availability of pediatric-specific medical devices to patients who need them.

Katerina Boucek, MD, director of the Pediatric Ventricular Assist Device Program at Ochsner Children's Hospital said, "We know where the gaps are in pediatric heart care, and we know the solutions; what's lacking is the research and support for future developments in pediatric heart failure therapies. Our youngest heart patients deserve access to more specialized devices which will allow them to be home with their families rather than spending months to years hospitalized awaiting a transplant."

Ochsner Children's Hospital offers comprehensive care for pediatric heart failure patients from infants to young adults. For three consecutive years, U.S. News and World Report has ranked Ochsner Children's the No.1 hospital for kids in Louisiana, with pediatric cardiology and heart surgery ranked among the nation's top 50.

"For decades, Ochsner Children's Hospital has built a team of renowned pediatric experts and one of the Gulf South region's most comprehensive and successful programs in pediatric cardiology and heart surgery," said Benjamin Peeler, MD, leader of Ochsner's Pediatric and Adult Congenital Cardiac Surgery Program.

"From infants to young adults, we can support the most critical heart failure patients with all available ventricular assist devices, but we know there is significant work ahead to build more pediatric-specific devices for our infants and young children in end-stage heart failure."

ACTION, a pioneering collaboration among pediatric heart failure hospitals nationwide, comprises of physicians, nurses, patients, families, and researchers. As a united force, the group is dedicated to improving outcomes and enhancing the quality of life for young [heart failure](#) patients.

This collaborative effort signifies an unprecedented milestone,

disrupting traditional approaches, and Ochsner Children's Hospital is dedicated to its mission.

Provided by Ochsner Health System

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