Reach Out and Read Founder Dr. Perri Klass Speaks to MEDiC Volunteers and Medical Students

By Anjali Tannan
MEDiC ROR Coordinator

Madison was fortunate to play host to Perri Klass, MD, for a visit which included Pediatrics Grand Rounds as well as other events on October 24-25, 2007. Dr. Klass is a Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics at New York University who also serves as the Medical Director and President of Reach Out and Read National Center, a nationally recognized early literacy awareness program.

As part of her time here, MEDiC invited Dr. Klass to speak to medical students. She discussed the importance of early literacy citing that by the time children reach first grade, one-third of them are in remedial reading programs. Students placed in such programs are more likely to remain in ‘slow’ reading groups throughout school and are at an increased risk of early pregnancy, substance abuse, and legal trouble.

Dr. Klass also discussed the benefits of reading aloud as it integrates vital cognitive skills like language, memory, and comprehension while stimulating imagination and preparing children for success in school. In addition to describing the developmental changes young children experience, Dr. Klass illustrated how clinicians can use books as tools to evaluate motor skills, language development and cognitive aptitude.

The unique presentation integrated childhood favorites like Goodnight Moon to establish a light-hearted and entertaining environment and remind students of the joys of reading children’s books. Finally, Dr. Klass presented evidence that programs like Reach Out and Read have been successful at increasing the amount of time parents set aside to read aloud with their children which eventually has been shown to increase receptive and expressive vocabulary scores in older toddlers.

As an organization, Reach Out and Read (ROR) is committed to making literacy promotion an integral part of pediatric care. The program was founded at Boston City Hospital in 1989 as a collaboration between pediatricians, family physicians, nurses and early childhood educators.

Since that time, more than 3500 Reach Out and Read sites have been established that distribute more than 4.9 million books to over 3 million children nationwide. The program is founded on three basic principles - first, at each well-child check-up doctors and nurses are trained to encourage parents to read aloud to their children and offer age-appropriate tips; second, each child receives

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Data Project Continues to Gather Information about MEDiC's Patient Population

By Eric Yanke  
Data Project Coordinator

The MEDiC data project tracks every MEDiC patient visit and records demographic as well as clinical data. This data is used to inform a variety of MEDiC decisions from book supplies for Reach Out and Read to prescription drug donation requests. The data project has been collecting data since 2005, and several trends are already apparent.

The most striking trend has been the increasing number of MEDiC patient visits. Total patient visits numbered 938 in 2005 and grew to 1132 in 2006. Based on the number of patient visits so far this year, MEDiC expects to see 1405 patient visits in 2007. This growth speaks not only to the magnitude of Madison's medically underserved community but also to the amount of health care provided by MEDiC clinics.

In contrast to the growth of patient visits, MEDiC clinics have consistently served a diverse community. As of 2007 37% of patients identified themselves as African American, 35% as Caucasian, and 23% as Latino. Latino patients are most strongly represented at MEDiC's Southside clinic.

From a clinical perspective, MEDiC clinics address a mixture of acute and chronic medical concerns. The most frequent diagnosis this year was viral upper respiratory tract infection. However, the remaining top 5 diagnoses (hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and depression) represent chronic medical conditions and are uniquely challenging to treat among an often transient patient population.

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ROR Founder Dr. Perri Klass visits UWSPMH

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a developmentally appropriate children’s book to take home at each of these visits; and third, volunteers are available to read to children in the waiting room in an effort to establish a literacy rich environment.

The MEDiC Reach Out and Read program has taken this basic model and applied it to our local clinics. Reach Out and Read operates weekly at the Salvation Army and Southside Clinics where over a hundred children are seen yearly. Each child that is seen is given a developmentally appropriate book and volunteer student clinicians advise parents to read aloud with their children as part of their guidance regarding child health. In addition, volunteers at the Salvation Army clinic set aside time before clinic to read with children currently staying at the shelter. On any given Tuesday night, the library will be filled with children of different ages and reading levels ranging from toddlers who can only speak a few words to elementary school children eager to find a book to help pass the time. Often older children can be found reading books in different corners as younger children attempt to find the storyteller who will allow them to get closest to the pictures. Volunteers have the opportunity to sit down with children and read a variety of books from seasonal books about Christmas to classic fairy tales.

In keeping with the ROR model, MEDiC has made a new goal to ensure that every child seen in clinic is given an age appropriate book to read. This is an expansion on the current Reach Out and Read policy where children are given books from the ages of 6 months to 5 years of age. The effort to expand the program hopes to facilitate early literacy and continue to encourage literacy in children who have already started school but can still benefit from stimulating reading material.

The efforts to expand the program have been largely facilitated by MEDiC’s advisor, Sharon Younkin and Dr. Dipesh Navsaria who serves as MEDiC’s Reach Out and Read Medical Director. Dr. Navsaria is a strong proponent of childhood literacy, having received a Masters degree in library and information science with an emphasis on children’s literature. He successfully started and ran two other Reach Out and Read programs in Illinois and is in the process of introducing ROR into clinics across Madison as well as establish an inpatient program at the American Family Children’s Hospital and the Meriter Hospital Newborn Intensive Care Unit.

MEDiC would like the thank Dr. Klass for her insight and enthusiasm, an energy that we strive to incorporate into our ever expanding programs.

“More than 3500 Reach Out and Read sites have been established that distribute more than 4.9 million books to over 3 million children nationwide.”

—Enhancing Education,
Volunteers of the Month

MEDiC volunteers make a huge difference in their patients’ lives and in the community. Below are the volunteers in past months who have shown exceptional dedication and service in the MEDiC clinics. Please join us in thanking them for their work in helping the underserved populations in Madison.

April 2007 — Dr. Cynthia Haq
May 2007 — Dr. Bruce Slater
June 2007 — Dr. Nicole Fett
July 2007 — Dr. Rosemarie Liu
August 2007 — Dr. Bruce Barrett
September 2007 — Dr. Brian Vasey
October 2007 — Dr. Albert Liebman

Fall Sees Expanded Services for MEDiC Patients

By Joseph Hansen
MEDiC President

The fall semester has seen expanded services at MEDiC clinics. An increase in physical therapy care and psychological counseling referrals allows MEDiC to provide more complete care for patients. Amanda LeLonde, PT student and MEDiC Council member, and Lisa Steinkamp, MEDiC PT faculty advisor and program director of the UWSMPH Division of Physical Therapy, have worked tirelessly over the fall to expand the level of physical-therapy care offered at MEDiC clinics. Along with pre-existing internal referrals system, physical therapy is now offered in some form at all six of the MEDiC clinics. This service improves care for MEDiC patients and increases the level of student clinical experiences.

Along with expanded PT care, MEDiC has forged an exciting new referral partnership with the UW School of Psychology and Education’s Community Counseling Center. The Community Counseling Center provides much needed psychological counseling services to underserved populations, including non-English speakers. The Center’s mission and capabilities make it an ideal partner for MEDiC. Brian Hilgeman, M2 and MEDiC Council member cultivated this partnership.

The MEDiC Council is excited about these new services, and is continuing to look for ways to improve care for patients and expand the educational experience for students.

Thank You to Our Fall and Winter Donors!!

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MEDiC Quick Updates

- MEDiC continues along an upward trend in number of patient visits over the past year.
- The most common diagnosis this year was viral upper respiratory tract infection.
- The rest of the top diagnoses are all chronic concerns: hypertension, asthma, diabetes, and depression. This continues to be a challenge for MEDiC volunteers.

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Become a Volunteer at a MEDiC Clinic!

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