October 25, 2012

UAB researcher receives grant to study cutting-edge therapy for pediatric brain cancer patients – Gregory Friedman, M.D., assistant professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology, has been awarded a St. Baldrick's Foundation Scholar grant of $330,000 for a period of three years to conduct research on medulloblastoma, the most common malignant brain tumor found in children. Friedman sees patients in The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders at Children's of Alabama.

Medulloblastomas affect children 10 times more frequently than adults; they account for 15 to 20 percent of all pediatric brain tumors. Friedman, an associate scientist at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, studies the ability of clinically ready viruses — such as the genetically altered herpes simplex virus — to kill brain tumor-initiating cells in difficult-to-treat medulloblastomas. Current treatments for this specific disease are harmful to the developing brain, and Friedman's research team hopes to provide the foundation for future pediatric clinical trials, using this cutting-edge therapy to benefit children with these deadly cancers.

"This grant is essential because it enables me to continue to work on something I am passionate about: developing novel, targeted, less-toxic therapies for children with cancers that hopefully will improve their outcomes and quality of life," says Friedman.

The St. Baldrick's Foundation is a volunteer-driven charity committed to funding the most promising research to find cures for childhood cancers and give survivors long and healthy lives. The group grants funds to some of the most brilliant childhood cancer research experts in the world and to younger professionals who will be the experts of tomorrow.

UAB pediatric cancer researcher receives grant to study childhood bone marrow disease
– Frederick Goldman, M.D., professor in the
UAB Division of Pediatric Hematology & Oncology
, has been awarded a $116,000 grant over two years by the
Diamond Blackfan Anemia Foundation
in support of his research to find a cure for Diamond Blackfan Anemia (DBA). Goldman is also director of the
Lowder Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplantation Program
at
The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders
at
Children's of Alabama
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DBA is a rare, childhood bone marrow failure syndrome characterized by the inability to make red blood cells. Goldman and research partner Tim Townes, Ph.D., chairman of the UAB Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Genetics
, plan to correct the genetic defect in skin cells obtained from patients with DBA, then convert the skin cells into hematopoietic stem cells that are once again capable of making red blood cells. Goldman and Townes are both senior scientists at the
UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center
.

“The ultimate goal of this preclinical study is to make this a therapeutic option, and possible cure, for patients who currently are being treated with monthly blood transfusions,” says Goldman.