

Jeffrey Epstein, Science Financier, Backs the Largest Crohn's Initiative in Pediatrics

The Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation has recently backed what has become the largest collaborative study of Crohn's and Colitis Disease in children. The study, called the Kids Pediatric Network, was initiated by the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America. Founded in 1967, the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding cures for Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis.

The Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation was founded by the prominent science philanthropist, Jeffrey Epstein in 2000. The foundation is known to support the most cutting edge scientific research around the world and financed the Program for Evolutionary Dynamics at Harvard University with a \$30 million dollar grant.

Today, there is a significant increase in the number of children diagnosed with Crohn's and Colitis Disease. The causes are largely unknown. However, good quality, pediatric-specific data is either limited or non-existent so treatment is based on adult data. There is a huge need for pediatric-specific information. For example, children under 10 years of age have distinct profile antibodies in their blood, suggesting that they have distinct mechanisms of disease.

Crohn's and Colitis is a chronic inflammatory condition of the gastrointestinal tract. Every year, more than 700,000 Americans are diagnosed. Crohn's affects the end of the small bowel, the beginning of the colon and sometimes parts of the gastrointestinal tract. Ulcerative colitis only affects the colon or large intestine. The cause of Crohn's and Colitis is uncertain but the chronic inflammation stems from the body's immune system attacking the gastrointestinal tract, targeting microbial antigens or healthy bacteria. Because of this, Crohn's and Colitis is classified as an autoimmune disorder.

By far the largest study of its kind, the Kids Pediatric Network currently operates across 29 medical centers in the US and Canada with over 1,709 children enrolled. The Network focuses on identifying the genetic, microbiological, and immunological factors that lead to severe bowel disease. The database is then used to develop individualized and pediatric approaches to treatment. More specifically, the study evaluates children at the beginning of Crohn's disease and monitors the entire progression. By integrating

and contrasting genetic and microbial data throughout the process, investigators also expect to predict aggressive versus benign disease as well as response to therapy.

So far, the Network's study has led to the accumulation of biospecimens from an unprecedented number of patients and their link to advanced or benign disease. The study has also amassed an unprecedented amount of genetic factors. For example, it is now determined that 17 genes are expressed differently in intestines of patients who developed a stricture. The group is developing a model for the expression of these genes to be used as predictors of risk for stricture development.

"Collaboration in medical research dramatically speeds up the discovery process," Jeffrey Epstein remarked and keeps the focus on the end goal, which is to find a cure." In addition to founding the Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation, Jeffrey Epstein is a former member of Rockefeller University, the New York Academy of Science, the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations and sits on the board of the Mind, Brain and Behavior Committee at Harvard University.