

Fetal Connections

Dear Colleagues,

Happy 2017! We hope this issue of **Fetal Connections** finds you well and that you enjoyed happy holidays with your loved ones. At the Fetal Medicine Institute, we have much to look forward to in the new year, including a number of new projects we are excited to share with you. However, I'd first like to take a look back on 2016 and reflect on some of our team's many accomplishments over this past year.

Among the most exciting projects for us in 2016 has been the establishment of our Congenital Zika Virus Program, the first of its kind in the region and only the second nationwide. In addition, 2016 also saw us forming important research partnerships both internationally and more locally. These included a research collaboration with scientists in Baranquilla, Colombia to study the effects of the Zika virus on the fetus and developing brain. Regionally, we brought to fruition an exciting collaborative research program between Children's National and the Inova Children's Hospital to advance maternal, fetal, and neonatal medicine. This \$2.8 million project has been five years in planning and brings together large patient populations and a remarkable body of clinical research and technological expertise to address critical health questions facing mothers and their babies.

Additionally, in 2016, a new fetal-neonatal neurologist, Sarah Mulkey, MD, PhD, joined our team. Dr. Mulkey hit the ground running, establishing herself as a cornerstone of both our clinical and research teams as well as securing research grant [funding](#) soon after her arrival. For more information about the type of research we will conduct jointly, please [click here](#).

This past year also has been a good one for our educational outreach initiatives. We expanded the range of topics and viewership for the Topics in Fetal Medicine CME webinar series. We designed this series to be



educational and collaborative, and we encourage you to tune in and to voice any suggestions for speakers and topics you might have to swohlers2@childrensnational.org. For more information on this topic series, please visit childrensnational.org/topics-fetalmed.

Finally, this year saw us launching our inaugural *International Symposium on the Fetal Brain*. We are dedicating this issue of **Fetal Connections** to a review of that event for those who were unable to attend. We were inspired by the attendance of many of our colleagues in the field and stimulated by the overwhelmingly positive reviews we received. The success of this first symposium has motivated us to launch a [second symposium next summer, on August 24-25, 2016, at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, DC](#), where we hope you will all join us!

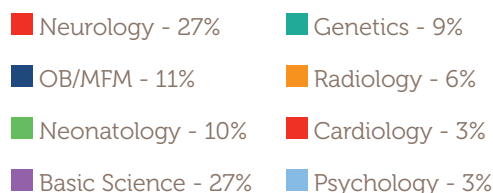
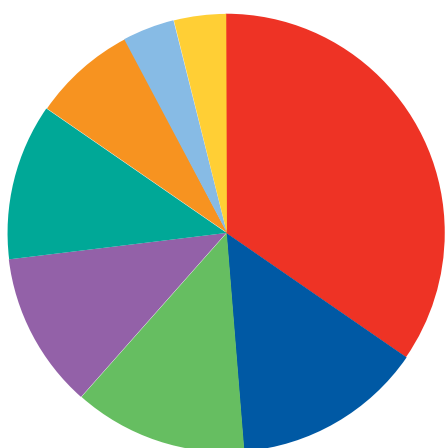
Best,
Adré

Adré J. du Plessis, MBChB, MPH

Director, Fetal Medicine Institute
Director, Fetal Brain Program
Division Chief, Fetal and Transitional Medicine

The Inaugural International Symposium on the Fetal Brain

2016 Attendees by Specialty



The First Event of Its Kind, Hosted Here In Washington, DC.

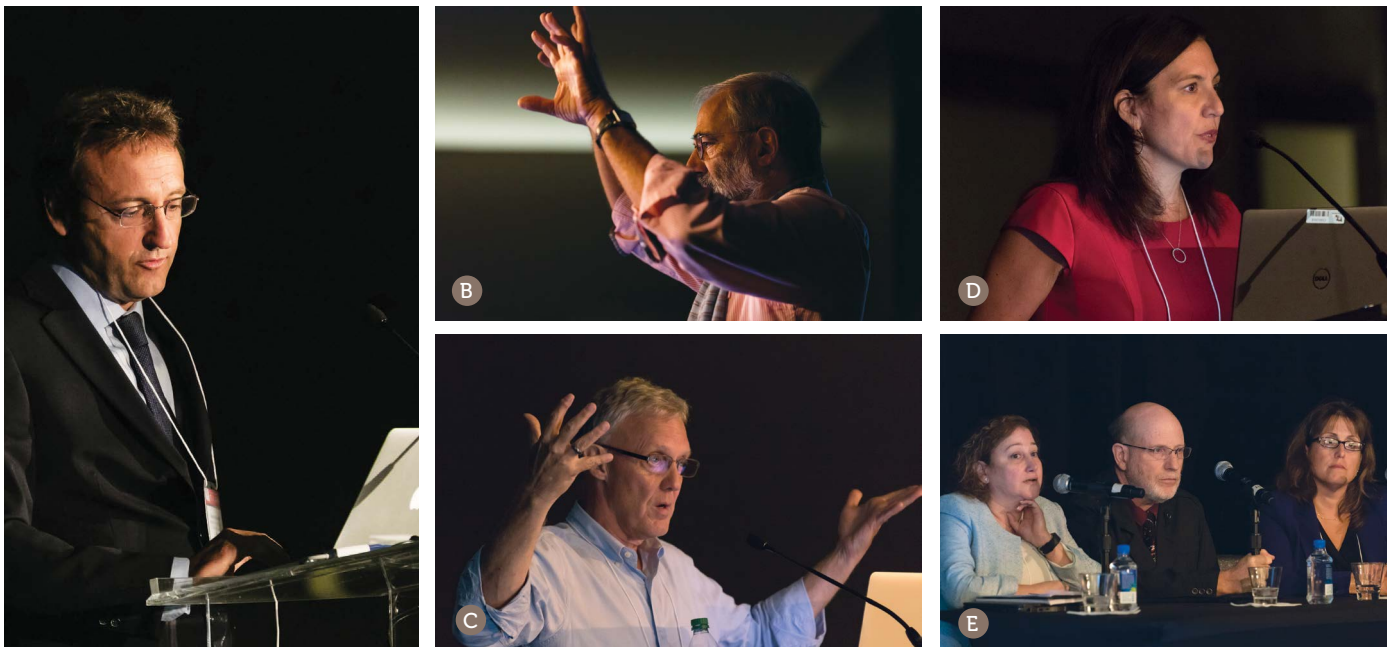
This symposium was designed to be multidisciplinary, in order to encourage progressive and enlightening debates across specialties and backgrounds. As can be seen from the chart below, this event successfully brought together clinicians and researchers from all different areas in fetal medicine, promoting new relationships and educational dialogue for all participants.

The symposium was separated out in four different sections:

1. Genetic, cellular, and molecular mechanisms involved in brain development
2. Effects of chronic fetal hypoxia on brain development
3. Neurodiagnostic advances and their role in understanding fetal brain development
4. The placenta and the developing brain: Emerging insights and future directions

The discussions held throughout the symposium were important and defining of the fetal medicine field today. We look forward to next year's conversations with many new participants as well as familiar faces returning to continue this discussion.





From left to right: (A) **Eduard Gratacos, MD (Barcelona)**, presenting on *The Global Impact of the Intrauterine Experience on Neuropsychological Health*, (B) **Yehezkel Ben-Ari, PhD (Marseilles)**, speaking on *The Neuroarcheology Concept*, (C) **Michael Meaney, CM, CQ, FRSC, PhD (Montreal)**, presenting on *Maternal Emotional Well-Being and Its Impact on Fetal Brain Development*, and (D) **Mary Donofrio, MD (Washington, DC)**, presenting on *Fetal Brain Oxygenation and Perfusion on Congenital Heart Disease: Impact on Neurodevelopment*.

The two-day session was rounded out by a panel on the Zika virus epidemic with (E) **Nahida Chakhtoura, MD**, from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), **William Dobyns, MD**, from Seattle Children's, and **Roberta DeBiasi, MD**, from Children's National providing probing insight into recent developments in the understanding of the virus.





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Fetal Hydrocephalus

March 21, 2017

**Congenital Lower
Extremity Anomalies**

April 18, 2017

Visit ChildrensNational.org/Topics-FetalMed to find an up-to-date schedule and view past presentations. Submit your speaker or topic recommendations to swohlers2@childrensnational.org.

Fetal Connections

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Second Annual International Symposium on the

FETAL BRAIN

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