

Giving Special Deliveries a Strong Start: Meet James Hocker, MD

Over two decades and counting—that’s how long Dr. Hocker has been delivering care to early and ill infants at Children’s Hospital of Illinois. *Children First* sat down with the doctor to discuss his career path and vision for the future.

Meet
JAMES
HOCKER,
MD



Q: WHAT DO YOU WANT PARENTS TO KNOW ABOUT NEONATOLOGY?

A: Neonatologists treat medical problems in newborns. We care for premature babies and those with ailments such as breathing issues, infections, and congenital malformations (birth defects).

Q: WHAT DREW YOU TO NEONATOLOGY?

A: When I rotated through the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) as a medical student at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria, I knew right away it was the place for me. Babies can be very, very sick, but they do tend to get better quickly. It’s very rewarding to be part of the healing process—and to support families during a very difficult time.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING CHANGES YOU’VE SEEN DURING YOUR TIME AT CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL?

A: The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis blessed us with a wonderful new building and state-of-the-art Neonatal Critical Care Unit (NCCU) in 2010. It’s rare to have facilities of this caliber outside a major urban center. It’s been an incredible gift to our local communities.

We’ve also changed our approach to care in the NCCU. A generation ago, the attending neonatologist—who supervises residents, medical students, and staff—made most of the decisions.

Today we operate more as a team. The physician, nurse, nurse practitioner, respiratory therapist, dietitian, and pharmacist work together to decide what’s best for the patient. This has improved our care, not to mention our patients’ outcomes.

Q: WHAT’S YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF NEONATOLOGY?

A: In recent years, we’ve seen really exciting advances in molecular biology. We’re now able to identify specific genes involved in childhood illnesses like cystic fibrosis and sickle-cell disease. Down the road, we may be able to manipulate genes to treat or prevent those diseases.

IN MEMORIAM: MARY SCHULTZ, MD

With heavy hearts, we at Children’s Hospital of Illinois bid farewell to a treasured longtime physician, Dr. Schultz, who passed away this summer. As an unwavering advocate for patients, Dr. Schultz led safety efforts to improve electronic medical records and help ensure positive outcomes for young patients. An outstanding educator, Dr. Schultz won several awards for guiding budding physicians with kindness and thoughtfulness. A treasured colleague, Dr. Schultz served as a mentor to many and an exemplary role model to all.

Her sense of humor, compassion, and grace will not be forgotten. We extend our sympathy, prayers, and support to Dr. Schultz’s family. We’ll miss you, Mary.



Mary Schultz,
MD

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