



Contact: Melinda Krigel  
Communications Director  
UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland  
510-428-3069, 510-388-5927 (cell)  
[mkrigel@mail.cho.org](mailto:mkrigel@mail.cho.org)

### **CHORI Scientist receives \$100,000 grant from Abate Med to help find a lasting treatment for Atopic Dermatitis**

Oakland, CA (January 19, 2017) – Laura Hertel, PhD, a virologist at Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI), has received a grant from Abate Med's founder, Dr. David Paslin, for a pre-clinical study on the efficacy of using a protein made by a common virus that infects the skin, to treat the cutaneous manifestations of atopic dermatitis.

The protein, MC148, is made by the Molluscum contagiosum virus and is released in the skin surrounding the small, round, and painless bumps caused by infection. The protein's role is to protect the virus from being attacked by the body's dendritic cells and T-lymphocytes that fight off infection in the skin. When this virus infects and releases this protein in the skin of atopic dermatitis patients, the areas surrounding the papules are cleared from the redness and inflammation that are the hallmark of this condition.

Atopic dermatitis is a chronic eczematous skin disease that usually begins in childhood and is often hereditary. The condition can produce areas of very itchy, inflamed and irritated skin. The condition varies by individual, but chronic or severe atopic dermatitis can cause thickening or scaling of the skin. As there is currently no cure for this disease, skin manifestations are usually treated with hydrating creams or topical steroids to reduce inflammation.

Dr. Hertel will use human skin tissues and cells derived from atopic dermatitis patients to test the effectiveness of the MC148 protein, delivered as a topical agent, to block the influx of dendritic cells in the skin, which causes the inflammation typical of this highly itchy condition.

"The causes of atopic dermatitis are not well understood, so it has been difficult to find a satisfactory treatment for the condition" says Dr. Hertel. "Our hope is to exploit a protein made by a virus to prevent the body's own cells from overreacting, thus providing a safe and effective treatment for those who are chronically affected by this condition."

Dr. David Paslin is a clinical dermatologist in Oakland and an assistant clinical professor at UCSF. During the course of his clinical practice, Dr. Paslin observed a patient with a severe and extensive form of atopic dermatitis ("eczema") whose skin was studded with Molluscum virus papules. "But very surprisingly, the skin immediately surrounding each papule was completely clear - no eczema at all,"

says Dr. Paslin. Among the proteins made by the Molluscum virus, Dr. Paslin's work indicates that MC148 might best explain the sustained clearing of skin inflammation.

Read more about [Dr. Hertel's research](#) at CHORI.

#### **About UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland & CHORI**

UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland (formerly Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland) is a premier, not-for-profit medical center for children in Northern California, and is the only hospital in the East Bay 100% devoted to pediatrics. UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland affiliated with UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital San Francisco on January 1, 2014. The hospital is one of only five ACS Pediatric Level I Trauma Centers in the state, and has one of largest pediatric intensive care units in Northern California. UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland is also a leading teaching hospital with an outstanding pediatric residency program and a number of unique pediatric subspecialty fellowship programs.

UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland's research arm, Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI), is internationally known for its basic and clinical research. CHORI is at the forefront of translating research into interventions for treating and preventing human diseases. For more information, go to [www.childrenshospitaloakland.org](http://www.childrenshospitaloakland.org) and [www.chori.org](http://www.chori.org).