March of Dimes Campaign to End Premature Birth

The History
For more than 75 years, the March of Dimes has been a powerful force for improving the health of infants, children and their families. The March of Dimes was founded in 1938 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to lead the fight to eradicate poliomyelitis. At the time, polio was a mysterious childhood crippler that paralyzed tens of thousands, including FDR himself. In response, the March of Dimes mobilized an effort that was unheard of in the history of medical philanthropy. After funding a nearly 20-year effort to develop an effective vaccine and building a grassroots volunteer force second to none, the March of Dimes provided for the vaccination of hundreds of millions of children and adults. In doing so, the March of Dimes fulfilled its original charter: the practical elimination of polio in the United States and many other countries in the world. This now legendary effort proved to be just the first of many accomplishments.

The Facts
Premature birth is one of the most intractable health challenges in modern medicine.
• One in ten babies in the United States is born prematurely each year
• Premature birth is the leading cause of newborn death from birth to age five
• Nearly half a million babies are affected annually
• Premature birth costs society at least $26 billion a year1
• Premature birth often leads to a lifetime of significant health challenges
• A late-premature baby’s risk of dying is about three times that of a full-term infant2
• 15 million children are born prematurely every year worldwide

The Research
• A transdisciplinary research or “team science” approach is being pioneered. Scientists from an unprecedented array of disciplines are collaborating to find answers to premature birth.
• Goals of the Prematurity Research Center in Ohio:
  – Discover the causes of preterm birth
  – Develop new ways to identify women or pregnancies at risk of preterm birth
  – Turn knowledge into effective clinical and policy-based solutions
• Research themes the Ohio Collaborative will pursue include:
  – Evolutionary Synthesis of Human Pregnancy
  – Genetics of Unique Human Populations
  – The Molecular Developmental Biology of Pregnancy
  – Progesterone Signaling in Pregnancy Maintenance and Preterm Birth
  – Sociobiology of Racial Disparities in Preterm Birth

The Partnership
• A network of innovative facilities called Prematurity Research Centers, to foster a new model of collaboration
• Five centers of excellence include Stanford University, the Ohio Collaborative, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Chicago-Northwestern-Duke
• Ohio partners include University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center; Ohio State University, Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Mt. Carmel Hospital; Case Western Reserve University, University Hospitals of Cleveland and MetroHealth System
• A March of Dimes scientific review committee will evaluate the research progress annually, and help shape its direction

The Campaign
Just as collaboration will be a key driver to our researchers’ success, so too must we work together to successfully achieve The Campaign’s goals. The time is now. Recent advances in medicine and technology are enabling innovative approaches that have never been tried before.

The March of Dimes and its five Prematurity Research Centers can galvanize the scientific community to answer the questions that will ultimately lead to saving newborn lives. By raising $75 million, we can put their breakthrough discoveries to work to end the crisis of premature birth and a build a better future for our children.

www.prematurityresearch.org/ohiocollaborative

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