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SILDENAFIL (VIAGRA) SHOWS PROMISE IN TREATING NEWBORNS WITH SEVERE BREATHING PROBLEMS

BALTIMORE -- Babies with persistent pulmonary hypertension – a condition in which newborns fail to adapt to breathing outside the womb – benefit from treatment with Sildenafil (Viagra), according to research to be shared during the Pediatric Academic Societies annual meeting to be held May 2-5 in Baltimore.

Dr. Amed Soliz, director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Miami Children's Hospital and president of a non-profit organization "Babies without Borders," shared results of a multi-center study conducted in Mexico and El Salvador that showed that Sildenafil was effective in providing oxygenation in neonates with persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN).

PPHN is a life-threatening condition that occurs in near-term or full-term babies who have persistent pulmonary artery constriction that decreases blood and tissue oxygenation. This condition has been associated with birth asphyxia, infections and meconium aspiration among other causes.

"Treatment with nitric oxide is the gold standard in the U.S.," said Dr. Soliz. "But in many developing countries, nitric oxide is not available. Use of the widely available Sildenafil shows promise as an alternative therapy not only for patients in developing countries but may in the future offer more affordable treatment for patients in developed countries as well," he said.

In the multi-site study, 49 term neonates were assigned to either a placebo or Sildenafil. The Sildenafil-treated patient group showed a significant improvement in oxygenation within the first hour of treatment and had a much lower mortality rate – 8 percent versus 50 percent of those not treated with Sildenafil.

Dr. Soliz is collaborating with several medical centers in South and Central America in conducting neonatal research.

About Miami Children's Hospital

Founded in 1950 by Variety Clubs International, Miami Children's Hospital® is South Florida's only licensed specialty hospital exclusively for children, with more than 650 attending physicians and over 130 pediatric sub-specialists. The 289-bed hospital is renowned for excellence in all aspects of pediatric medicine with several specialty programs ranked among the best in the nation in 2008 by U.S. News & World Report. The hospital is also home to the largest pediatric teaching program in the southeastern United States and has been designated an American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet facility, the nursing profession's most prestigious institutional honor.