

CHOP Oncology Researcher Elected to Institute of Medicine

In October, Tom Curran, Ph.D., FRS (*right*), deputy scientific director of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute, was elected to the Institute of Medicine, a nonprofit that recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the field of medicine and educates the government and the public about health and medical issues. Curran is the sixth CHOP staff member to be elected to this prestigious organization.

Curran, who holds the Mai and Harry F. West Endowed Chair in Pediatric Research, is best known for his research



on pediatric brain tumors and his efforts to find better treatments for patients who suffer from them.

It's a quest he began in 1996, when he met medulloblastoma patients who had been cured of their disease. One teen had great difficulty walking, and his mother

reported that he was struggling in school. His physician attributed both problems to treatments the boy had received.

It was a career-changing moment for Curran. "I wanted to develop drugs that wouldn't have side effects," he says.

He and his colleague Peter Phillips, M.D., may be close to reaching that goal. Their work recently led to a clinical trial of a compound that targets specific gene mutations associated with medulloblastoma.

It's been 14 years since Curran met the patients who continue to inspire his research, and he encourages his research staff to seek out similar connections: "The perspective you get," he says, "will last for a lifetime." ■