Molecular Mechanisms Linking the Environment to Children’s Health

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April 10, 2018
4:00 to 5:00 PM
121 S. Main Street, Room 245

The role of the maternal environment on lifelong offspring health underlies the development origins of health and disease and is a growing area of research. As the interface between the mother and fetus, the placenta performs a variety of functions that are critical to development. Our lab focuses on the placenta’s role in DOHaD, driven by our central hypothesis that the placenta is a sensor and responder to the maternal environment and through its critical functions can program long term child health. We are utilizing state-of-the-art genomic technologies applied to human pregnancy and birth cohorts to characterize placenta function and determine how environmental factors impact these molecular features. More broadly, these results can be interpreted as a way to begin to consider how the early environment can program lifelong disease risk, and to identify potential points for intervention and prevention strategies.