

Inside the quest to solve mystery disease paralyzing kids

To parents and the press, the “new” disease that is paralyzing kids is a mystery. Media coverage of [acute flaccid myelitis](#) (AFM), which causes sudden limb weakness and paralysis in children, has given families the impression that health care providers and public health officials are sitting quietly and helplessly.

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That just isn't so.

Parents have a right to be concerned about this illness. But they should also know that AFM is rare, a one-in-a-million event. It does not spread within families, hospitals, or towns. Although a virus called [enterovirus D68](#), along with other viruses that cause respiratory and diarrheal illness, has been linked to the disease, a single definitive cause hasn't yet been identified. This isn't because we aren't looking: Physicians, scientists, and public health officials are working tirelessly to find answers and the best treatments.

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At [Children's National Health System](#) in Washington, D.C., where we work, specialized programs have long been in place to combat emerging infections and neuroinflammatory disorders. Both of these are relevant to acute flaccid myelitis due to its association with viruses and the nerve inflammation it causes. Thanks to our program and similar programs in place at other pediatric medical centers, evidence-based, standardized clinical pathways now guide the evaluation and treatment of every child suspected to have acute flaccid myelitis.

Read full, original post: [A dispatch from the front lines of a 'mystery' disease: acute flaccid myelitis](#)