The classic communicable diseases: smallpox, chickenpox, diphtheria, measles, pertussis and scarlet fever – and other infectious diseases were the primary factor in the evolution of pediatrics as a specialty area of medicine. It is a curious fact, given the preeminent role that infections played in the history of pediatrics, that pediatric infectious disease was very late in becoming a recognized subspecialty. The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society did not emerge until 1984, and board certification was not offered until 1995.

At UT Southwestern the genesis of infectious disease was the appointment of John D. Nelson as a Research Fellow in 1959. Formal pediatric infectious disease training programs did not exist at that time. Most pediatricians interested in infectious diseases got their training in internal medicine infectious disease programs. Dr. Nelson’s mentor, Jay P. Sanford, was a luminary in adult infectious diseases, and he benefited from affiliations with microbiologists at UT Southwestern, New York University and UCLA.

In 1963 Dr. Nelson’s first trainee was Kenneth C. Haltalin, who then joined the faculty in 1965. Also in 1965 the formal pediatric infectious disease fellowship program was initiated with Edgar O. Ledbetter. Almost simultaneously, pediatric infectious disease training programs made their appearance in four other major cities: Minnesota (Louis Wannamaker), Boston (Jerome Klein), Houston (Martha Yow) and New York (Heinz Eichenwald). Many other programs throughout the United States blossomed soon after these pioneering programs.

The earliest research area of investigation in the division was development of fluorescent antibody techniques for rapid diagnosis of enteropathogenic *Escherichia coli* diarrheal disease, pertussis, diphtheria and several other infections. A major focus for many years was pharmacokinetics of antibiotics to establish appropriate dosage regimens for many pediatric infectious diseases. This has subsequently been expanded to pharmacodynamics and pharmacogenomics. Major studies in experimental animal infections have been done in meningitis and in viral and mycoplasma pulmonary infections. Dr. Sanchez has studied congenital syphilis and many other diseases of newborns. Dr. Siegel is a national leader in the area of nosocomial infections. Many other areas of bacterial, viral and fungal infections have been studied, and the Division has been on the forefront of international collaborative research studies.

An important milestone in the history of the Division was the appearance in 1968 of George H. McCracken, Jr., fresh from a two-year fellowship with John Sever at the National Institutes of Health. He became the Division Director in 1976, a position he held until 2009.

In 1965, Dr. Nelson produced the first edition of *The Pocketbook of Pediatric Antimicrobial Therapy* which has continued through 18 editions. *The Pediatric
Infectious Diseases Journal was founded in 1982 by Drs. Nelson and McCracken, and 28 years later they continue as Chief Editors.

From 1981 through 2007, Drs. Nelson and McCracken organized and led the National Pediatric Infectious Disease Seminar, a post-graduate education course that rotated annually to several cities throughout the United States and attracted more than 500 registrants.

Fellowship training has been a major emphasis in the Division. Originally training was for two years, expanding to three years in the 1990s in accordance with the requirements for subspecialty board eligibility. One to three new fellows are accepted annually so that at any one time there five or six fellows. Emphasis has been on training fellows from foreign countries so that many of them can return to their countries to initiate infectious disease programs. There have been over 90 fellows from 27 countries.

Jane D. Siegel joined the faculty in 1978 after completing her fellowship in the division, followed by Trudy V. Murphy in 1982. Pablo Sanchez was a unique addition to the faculty in 1988 because he was doubly trained in neonatology and infectious disease. Additional infectious disease faculty were Octavio Ramilo in 1990, Hasan Jafri in 1999, R. Doug Hardy in 2001, Michelle Gill and Theresa Barton in 2003, Monica Ardura in 2008 and Jeffrey McKinney in 2009.

In May 2009, Jeffrey Kahn joined the department as the Director of the Division of Infectious Disease. He was recruited from Yale University where he studied newly discovered human viruses. Dr. Kahn’s laboratory was the first group in the United States to report the clinical features, epidemiology and genetic features of human metapneumovirus, human coronavirus HKU1 and NL63, and human bocavirus. These new viruses are associated with upper and lower respiratory tract disease in infants and young children.

Currently, consultations by division faculty involve patients in the pediatric and neonatal intensive care units (at Parkland and CMC); those with inherited or acquired immune-deficiency, including patients receiving immunosuppressive therapy for cancer, organ transplantation, bone marrow and stem cell transplantation; inflammatory bowel disease and rheumatologic disorders; and infants and children with a wide variety of classic as well as unusual infectious disease problems. The division is also responsible for an active infectious disease ambulatory clinic at Children’s Medical Center, where follow-up care is provided to children with complicated infections who were initially managed as in-patients and to those who have been referred to the clinic by practicing physicians in the community. The division also manages approximately 100 HIV-infected children and adolescents and an additional group of infants and young children with perinatal HIV exposure.

Research in the division continues in such areas as diarrhea, bacterial meningitis, clinical pharmacology, efficacy and safety of antimicrobial agents, pathogenesis of meningeal and respiratory infections (RSV and Mycoplasma), the link between pulmonary infection and asthma, HIV/AIDS, nosocomial infections, genomic signatures in children with different infections, immunobiology of the dendritic cell responses to RSV and influenza infections, newly emerging human viruses and the epidemiology of MRSA infections in different populations and neonatal infections.