Laura Bernstein was nine when she was told she had diabetes.

One moment, she was an ordinary kid. The next, she was in the hospital.

“I didn’t know what that was,” said Laura, now 16. “I thought, ‘Did I eat too many brownies the day before? …Why is this happening to me? It’s not fair.’ ”

These days, Laura uses an insulin pump, and she’s learned to cope with her diabetes. But it can be a struggle for the whole family.

“It’s frustrating,” said her mother, Evvy. “I don’t even know what I don’t know.”

Now that Laura’s a teen-ager, Evvy has a whole new host of questions about how diabetes could affect her daughter’s life. What about driving? Alcohol? What if her sugar goes low while taking the SAT? Meanwhile, Laura gets frustrated that the biggest question that health professionals ask is where her blood sugar level registers.

USF Health has launched a new program, Bringing Science Home™, that will help patients and their families deal with such issues in chronic diseases.

Laura Bernstein’s point – that she is more than just a number – is at the heart of Bringing Science Home. The program will be a model for helping people with a lifelong illness improve their health through empowerment and behavior.

Nicole Johnson, Miss America 1999, is executive director of the project. She has Type 1 diabetes herself.

“It’s so exciting that USF is on the forefront” of supporting families, she said. “Managing numbers is not enough. Bringing Science Home will work in partnership with families to create the other parts of their vision of ideal care.”

To live with a chronic illness, day in and day out, people need more than doctor and hospital visits. They need a healthcare partner to be part of their lives. We want to create an optimistic approach to lifespan illness.

Bringing Science Home, a new project that USF Health has embarked on in partnership with The Patterson Foundation, will use diabetes as a case study. Eventually, the program will be expanded to help people with other chronic diseases, such as asthma or lupus.

USF Health will base the project on life stages, helping people as their health needs change. USF Health will start its project by focusing on the life stage transition from high school to college. This change can be especially difficult for someone who must learn to manage a chronic disease more independently.

Ultimately, we will create a new model for health education and care. We’ll gain the expertise to apply the lessons we learn from diabetes to other chronic diseases.

As ambitious as it is, the Bringing Science Home project is the first step for USF Health’s groundbreaking work to rethink how we care for chronic care. USF aims to find a hospital partner to create a Center for Lifespan Disease.

We hope to help a whole generation gain the courage of Laura.

“It’s part of who I am,” Laura says of diabetes. “And I’m not going to let it hold me back from anything.”
MISSION
To empower people touched by chronic disease to live optimistically and to create a new model for chronic disease education and care.

PROJECT PLAN
Empowered by informed research and critical analysis of programs nationwide, this project will co-design solutions to chronic disease education and care with patient audiences. The focus is on learning patient and population needs and desires. Using real life input to drive the creative process, we will then create products to best serve the impacted individuals and groups.

WE VALUE…
• People living with chronic disease and their experiences
• Families coping with disease
• Learning – from and with people touched by chronic disease
• The need for support and connection among people with disease – real & virtual
• Partnerships
• Creative thought

The Patterson Foundation exists to motivate individuals and entities to think and act beyond today’s reality. The Foundation believes that through innovative, collaborative philanthropy it will create new realities that transform communities. Along the way, the Foundation will strive to share what it learns and accomplishes with the rest of the world. As the legacy of The Patterson Foundation is created, the Foundation will continue to evaluate the courses of action that will best effect positive change.

The Patterson Foundation is a New Reality Foundation. This means it generates philanthropic impact by finding innovative ways to join together with other individuals and entities, making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.