



Children's Health Update

Doctors And Scientists Team Up To Fight Childhood Cancer

(NAPSA)—Survival rates overall for childhood cancer are almost 80 percent—a marked advance against a disease that was curable in only a small fraction of children 50 years ago.

However, despite progress, pediatric cancer remains the leading cause of death due to disease among U.S. children older than 1 year of age. While September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month nationwide, at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the fight against this disease is a year-round mission. Doctors and scientists work together not only to improve survival rates for childhood cancer, but to develop better, safer therapies to treat the disease.

"Two major efforts define our mission. One of those is to provide the best care today for every child who comes to St. Jude," said Dr. William E. Evans, St. Jude director and CEO. "The other is to conduct research that makes treatments better tomorrow."

Performance Earns An Award

For its efforts, St. Jude was named the nation's top children's cancer hospital in 2010–11, receiving the best overall score summarizing quality of care in a survey from U.S. News & World Report. That ranking was based on the hospital's performance in three areas: reputation; medical outcomes such as cancer survival; and care-related indicators of quality such as the number of patients, nursing staff and other factors.

From Bench To Bedside

Employing a bench-to-bedside approach—one of the hospital's founding concepts—basic scientists and physicians work in tandem to translate laboratory discoveries into cures. This pairing has notably helped St. Jude investigators



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improve survival rates for the most common childhood cancer—acute lymphoblastic leukemia—from 4 percent when the hospital opened, to 94 percent today.

The bench-to-bedside approach recently helped St. Jude investigators dramatically advance the survival rate for pediatric acute myeloid leukemia, a cancer of the white blood cells.

Smarter use of new and existing tools and technologies, including more sensitive tests to find the handful of cancer cells that survive the first round of treatment, helped push the survival rate to 71 percent three years after diagnosis—20 percent higher than previously reported U.S. rates. Similar doctor-and-scientist collaborations are also responsible for recent insights into several childhood brain tumors, offering more targeted therapies to combat the diseases.

Focus On The Cancer Genome

In hopes of accelerating progress against childhood cancer, hos-

pital officials earlier this year announced an ambitious effort to identify the genetic changes that give rise to some of the world's deadliest childhood cancers. By decoding the genomes of more than 600 childhood cancer patients, researchers hope to identify mistakes that lead to cancer.

"We are very encouraged by the progress made to date, but we're never satisfied," Evans said. "We're focused on employing the latest technologies, new approaches to drug discovery and innovative clinical trials to push the cure rates higher."

St. Jude is financially supported by thousands of individual donors, organizations and corporations, without which the hospital's work would not be possible. In 2010, it was ranked the most trusted charity in the nation in a public survey conducted by Harris Interactive.

For more information, go to www.stjude.org or call (901) 595-3300.