

New Hope for Children's Cancers

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

by Steven A. Wicinski

Cancer is rare in people between the ages of 15 and 30, but it is still the number one killer of children – more than AIDs, asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and congenital anomalies combined. According to statistics from the the Jeff Gordon Children's Foundation, 13,500 children are diagnosed with cancer every year in the United States. And one in five will die from the disease before the age of 20.

The Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC) deals with life and death situations daily while treating children's complex and life-threatening cancers. "We treat children from newborns through adolescents into their early 20s," says Dr. J. Nathan Hagstrom, M.D., who specializes in pediatric hematology and oncology.

"Not only do we provide quality, state-of-the-art critical care and a superb patient-family experience, we also do important research and offer important critical trials and experimental therapeutics," adds Dr. Hagstrom. "It's that balance of excellent care with a real human side to our staff and what we do – resulting in a WOW experience!"

With their own faculty at the University of Connecticut, CCMC partners with the university in cancer research, providing expert consultation and treatment in malignant sarcomas, neuroblastoma, wilms tumor, and other cancers.

Clinical Trials

"Over eight percent of our patients will be eligible for clinical trials," says Dr. Hagstrom. "Especially in cancer care, studies show that patients enrolled in clinical trials

have better outcomes. We have as many trials open as possible, and we enroll as many patients as possible.

“Some phase 1 and phase 2 trials are specifically open for patients with advanced and recurring cancers,” adds Dr. Hagstrom. “This is unique to the northeast. We’re the only facility in New England to offer this. We even get patients from New York and Massachusetts.”

Facilities Abound at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center

CCMC is among the best facilities in the nation. On October 31, 2011, they opened their outpatient Clinical Care Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders.

The center provides state-of-the-art exam rooms, procedure rooms, and a lab. More importantly, there are eight infusion rooms (called the Janet B. & Stanley Cohen Infusion Center) which, unlike most cancer centers, are all private. There’s also a Team Room where staff can go to unwind, as well as a Family Resource room where parents and other family members can relax during a child’s treatment. What’s more, children admitted to the hospital are also provided private rooms.

A Real Quality of Life Team

Aside from offering the best cancer treatment technology and facilities, CCMC also takes a holistic approach to cancer care. “Our team looks at quality of life and the role of exercise during cancer treatment. Children are resilient, and typically tolerate treatment better than adults,” says Dr. Hagstrom.

Through its diverse team of Pediatric Oncologists, Physical Therapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Child Life specialists, CCMC continuously researches how exercise impacts quality of life and the immune system. They work closely with patients and families to guide them through the treatment process. There’s also a special focus on helping children understand their disease, while encouraging play and other activities to help them cope with their illness.

To learn more, visit <http://www.connecticutchildrens.org>
