

American Cancer Society Recognizes National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Focuses attention on the need for further research and better treatments to create a world with more birthdays for children

ATLANTA 2009/09/04 -Despite major advances in treatment and survival in the last three decades, childhood cancer is still the leading cause of death from disease in children under 15. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 10,730 children in the United States under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer in 2009, and recognizes National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September as a way to focus attention on the need to continue the fight against these cancers.

Progress in the development of effective new treatments for children with cancer has been particularly significant during the past three decades. While incidence rates have been increasing slightly since 1975, mortality rates for childhood cancer have declined by about 50 percent over the same time period, and many children can now be cured, particularly if they are treated at a pediatric medical center staffed with experts and specialized programs for childhood cancer. The types of cancers that develop in children are also very different from the types that develop in adults. Although there are exceptions, childhood cancers tend to respond better to chemotherapy. Because these treatments can result in side effects months or years later, long-term follow-up guidelines have been developed for screening and management of late effects in survivors of childhood cancer (see www.survivorshipguidelines.org).

The American Cancer Society is committed to finding better treatments for childhood cancer. As of February 2009, the Society had 31 grants in effect totaling \$14.4 million related to childhood cancer, with approximately three percent of all research expenditures as childhood cancer grants. Bart Kamen, M.D., Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, University of New Jersey; Irwin Bernstein, M.D., Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, Seattle; and Ching-Hon Pui, M.D., St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, are three of eleven current Society funded Clinical Research Professors who are specialists in the treatment of childhood cancer.

"Families of children who have been diagnosed with cancer are often hit with a one-two punch," said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., chief executive officer for the Society. "Not only are they faced with a frightening diagnosis, but also they face a maze of cancer treatment choices, questions about coverage, and quite possibly a stack of medical bills, all at once. This underscores the need to create a health care system that provides quality, affordable health care for all Americans."

In addition to these efforts, the Society has also published several books about childhood cancers. One such book, titled *Angels & Monsters*, presents the stories of 25 children with cancer and the art they created to share their cancer battles with the world. *Jacob Has Cancer* is a great coloring book to help children understand how a child with cancer might feel and presents encouragement and helpful ideas for friends and classmates. The Society also offers information to help make treatment decisions and access to its programs everyday around the clock through 1-800-227-2345 or cancer.org, and continues to fight for a world with less cancer and more birthdays.

About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing about \$3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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