American Cancer Society and St. Baldrick's Foundation Award Additional $720,000 in Research Grants Focused on Advancing Childhood Cancer Treatments

ATLANTA, February 16, 2024 - The American Cancer Society (ACS) and St. Baldrick's Foundation recently awarded $720,000 in Pilot Accelerator grants meant to fill the funding gap in clinical trials focused on childhood cancer patients. These grants require researchers use biospecimens and data collected in clinical trials to accelerate the progression of new treatment options. Projects in this third cohort of grantees will focus on testing the addition of the new drug venetoclax to the treatment of infant acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) with chemotherapy and immunotherapy, improving the treatment and sustaining remission for pediatric high-risk acute myeloid leukemia (AML), and developing new therapies for mixed lineage leukemia (MLL)- rearranged leukemia. The following three investigators and institutions were each awarded $240,000 grants for two-year projects:

Kathrin Bernt, MD, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Title: Venetoclax for infant ALL – COG AALL2321

Challice Bonifant, MD, PhD, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Title: Donor NK cell therapy for pediatric myeloid malignancies

Linda Resar, MD, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Title: Targeting the HMGA1 Epigenome and Downstream Networks in MLL-r Leukemia

Over the past 50 years, outcomes for children diagnosed with most types of cancer have largely improved. However, some cancers like brain tumors (diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma or DIPG) remain fatal in children due to limited treatment and outcome advancements. More than half of U.S. childhood cancer patients are treated in clinical trials created to answer specific questions that determine which of two treatment protocols achieve the best results. Rarely is there funding to go a step further to use this data to uncover new treatment options that improve care and survival.

In the first round of Accelerator grants awarded in 2021, six grants totaling $3 million were awarded to fund research focused on neuroblastoma, pediatric ALL, and AML. In the second year, five grants totaling $1.2 million were awarded to focus on chemotherapy treatment outcomes in lymphoma patients, immunotherapy development to treat leukemia and lymphoma, and gliomas, a deadly and difficult to treat pediatric cancer.

Approximately 9,620 children in the United States under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer in 2024. The cancer death rate has declined by more than half from 1970 to 2021 in both children and adolescents, largely due to improvements in treatment and high participation in clinical trials. After accidents, cancer is the second leading cause of death in children ages 1 to 14.

For more information on childhood cancer, visit cancer.org.

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About the American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About St. Baldrick's Foundation

Every 2 minutes, a child somewhere in the world is diagnosed with cancer. In the U.S., 1 in 5 will not survive. The St. Baldrick's Foundation, the largest charity funder of childhood cancer research grants, is on a mission to Conquer Kids' Cancer by supporting the most promising research to find cures and better treatments for all childhood cancers. When you give to St. Baldrick's, you don't just give to one hospital – you support virtually every institution with the expertise to treat kids with cancer across the U.S. St. Baldrick's ensures that children fighting cancer now — and those diagnosed in the future — will have access to the most cutting-edge treatment, by supporting every stage of research, from new ideas in the lab to the training of the next generation of researchers, to lifesaving clinical trials. Visit StBaldricks.org and help #ConquerKidsCancer.

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