



DOVE-HAVEN FOUNDATION  
MONTHLY BULLETIN

**SEPTEMBER**  
**Edition.**

**PROTECTING**  
**THE LEADERS**  
**OF TOMORROW -**  
**SYNOPSIS ON CHILDHOOD CANCERS**

## **KEY FACTS**

- Cancer is a leading cause of death for children and adolescents around the world and approximately 300,000 children aged 0 to 19 years old are diagnosed with cancer each year.
- In high-income countries more than 80% of children with cancer are cured, but in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) only about 20% are cured.
- Improving outcomes for children with cancer requires early and accurate diagnosis followed by effective treatment.
- Most childhood cancers can be cured with generic medicines and other forms of treatments including surgery and radiotherapy.

## **THE PROBLEM**

Cancer is a leading cause of death for children and adolescents worldwide. In high-income countries more than 80% of children with cancer are cured, but in many low- and middle- income countries (LMIC) only 20% are cured.

The reasons for lower survival rates in LMICs include an inability to obtain an accurate diagnosis, inaccessible therapy, abandonment of treatment, death from toxicity (side effects), and excess relapse, in part due to lack of access to essential medicines and technologies addressing each of these gaps improves survival and can be highly cost-effective.

## **WHAT CAUSES CANCER IN CHILDREN?**

Cancer occurs in people of all ages and can affect any part of the body. It begins with genetic changes in a single cell that then grows out of control. In many cancers, this results in a mass (or tumour). If left untreated, cancer generally expands, invades other parts of the body and causes grave consequences. Unlike cancer in adults, the vast majority of childhood cancers do not have a known cause thus placing the emphasis of management on early detection and treatment.

Some chronic infections are risk factors for childhood cancer and have major relevance in low- and middle-income countries. For example, HIV, Epstein-Barr virus and malaria increase the risk of some childhood cancers.



Other infections can increase the child's risk of developing cancer as an adult, so it is important to be vaccinated and pursue other methods such as early diagnosis or screening to decrease chronic infections that lead to cancer, whether in childhood or later.

## **IMPROVING OUTCOMES OF CHILDHOOD CANCER**

Because it is generally not possible to prevent cancer in children, the most effective strategy to reduce the burden of cancer in children is to focus on a prompt, correct diagnosis followed by effective therapy.

## **EARLY DIAGNOSIS**

When identified early, cancer is more likely to respond to effective treatment and result in a greater probability of survival, less suffering, and often less expensive and less intensive treatment. Significant improvements can be made in the lives of children with cancer by detecting cancer early and avoiding delays in care. A correct diagnosis is essential to treat children with cancer because each cancer requires a specific treatment regimen that may include surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy.

Some early signs of childhood cancers include:

- An unusual lump or swelling
- Unexplained paleness and loss of energy
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- An ongoing pain in one area of the body
- Limping
- Unexplained fever or illness that doesn't go away
- Frequent headaches, often with vomiting
- Sudden eye or vision changes
- Sudden unexplained weight loss

**FOCUS SHOULD BE ON EARLY DETECTION OF SIGNS AND TREATMENT OF CHILDHOOD CANCERS TO IMPROVE OUTCOME OR ACHIEVE CURE.**

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