**10 Facts about Childhood Cancers*  
**June 2, 2011**

Although the relative number of children who have cancer is small, the opportunity for improving children’s rates of survival is great. The issue demands increased global investment in diagnosis and treatment.

1) Each year more than 175,000 children are diagnosed with cancer.¹

2) Among 5-14 year olds, cancer is the: #2 cause of death in wealthy countries, #3 cause of death in upper middle-income countries, #4 cause of death in lower middle-income countries, and #8 cause of death in low-income countries.¹

3) More than 85% of pediatric cancer cases and 95% of deaths occur in developing countries that use less than 5% of the world’s resources.¹

4) In the poorest 25 countries in the world, an estimated 90% of children with cancer die. In Canada, the figure is 12%. The disparity in survival rates between rich and poor countries is greater for childhood cancers than for any other cancers.²

5) Nonetheless, childhood cancer in lower and middle-income countries receives little attention from researchers and health authorities, and even UNICEF has not made cancer a priority.

6) Unlike many adult cancers, it is not possible to improve the survival of childhood cancers through “prevention or early detection” – with a few notable exceptions, such as retinoblastoma.

7) The majority of children with cancer can be cured – especially diseases such as Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia – if they receive prompt, effective and complete treatment. However, 85% of these children live in poor countries with severely limited access to information and effective treatment and care.

8) There are a growing number of innovative programs that effectively address the challenge of treating childhood cancers in developing countries in spite of constrained resources. These can and have been replicated around the world. For example, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital’s International Outreach Program has partnerships with 15 countries that provide mentoring, consultation of clinical services, education, and research to strengthen children’s cancer services in resource-poor countries.³,⁴

9) There are low-cost drugs that, if made available, could greatly increase children’s survival rates. For example, Burkitt’s lymphoma, which is the most common childhood cancer in Africa, is potentially curable at a cost of only US$50 per patient with a generic drug that has a 50% cure rate.⁵

10) Creative health financing and insurance schemes, such as Seguro Popular in Mexico, cover the cost of treating all childhood cancers. As a result of eliminating major cost barriers, the country has seen a marked increase in adherence to treatment.⁶

---


