



Advance Childhood Cancer Outcomes in Aotearoa and Modern Cancer Results for Children

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DESCRIPTION

Childhood cancer is the leading cause of death by disease in children aged 0-14 years in Aotearoa. While advances in medical technology and practices have extended lifespans, and improved survival rates for many types of childhood cancer, there is still more we can do to improve outcomes for children affected by this complex condition. The possibilities for improving childhood cancer outcomes in Aotearoa must take into account a range of factors, ranging from genetics to environmental influences. Understanding the causes of childhood cancer is essential for developing better ways to diagnose, treat and prevent it. The most common type of childhood cancer is leukemia accounting for almost a third (29%) of cases followed by brain tumours (19%), non-Hodgkin lymphoma (8%) and Wilms tumour (6%). Interestingly, not all forms of childhood cancer are as common as these four; there are numerous other forms that exist, each with its own set of unique challenges when it comes to diagnosis and treatment. It is also important to consider that while some forms of childhood cancers are becoming less common such as Wilms Tumour others may be increasing due to factors like pollution, lifestyle choices and genetic mutations. This makes exploring the possibilities for improving outcomes even more vital so we can ensure every child affected by this condition receives the best possible support and care [1,2].

Despite recent advances in the treatment of childhood cancer, outcomes are not as favorable as for adults. Aotearoa has made great strides in improving access to the best possible treatments and services available, however the overall prognosis for childhood cancers is not as good as adult cancers. The five-year survival rate for children with cancer is significantly lower than that of adults; approximately 18%-30% lower. Treatment options are limited, often aggressive, and can cause long-term side effects such as secondary cancers, infertility, and cognitive deficits. Early detection and diagnosis are key to improving outcomes in Aotearoa, yet diagnostic delays remain an issue due to limited resources or knowledge about rarer forms of cancer among

primary care providers. Furthermore, access to essential treatments such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy remains a challenge due to financial difficulties or geographical location [3-7].

When it comes to improving the outcomes for childhood cancer in Aotearoa, there are a variety of potential strategies that should be explored. Firstly, increased access to care and treatments is paramount. This could be achieved through increasing awareness of available services and providing more comprehensive medical insurance coverage to families facing these challenges. Secondly, creating support systems for young people and their families is vital. Many families may feel isolated during this difficult time, and having resources such as counselling and peer support could help them cope. By exploring all the potential strategies available, we can work towards reducing the impact of childhood cancer in our community [8].

The success of medical research in childhood cancer over the past few decades has been remarkable, with survival rates now reaching upwards of 80 % for some cancers. This means that many more children are surviving their battle with cancer and going on to live full, healthy lives. Improved outcomes in childhood cancer can provide a variety of benefits, from improved health and longevity to reduced financial burden, emotional support, and advanced treatments. Improved outcomes can also reduce financial burden on families dealing with the diagnosis of a child's cancer. With more successful treatments available, families may be able to avoid expensive hospital stays, multiple rounds of chemotherapy, or other costly treatments that may not be covered by insurance or government programs. Improved outcomes can also provide emotional support for families dealing with childhood cancer. By providing hope that their child's future will be brighter than it would have been had they not received advanced treatment options, parents and families are given strength in their fight against this devastating illness. Families can also be reassured that any symptoms or side effects experienced by their child during treatment will be manageable and temporary in nature instead of

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permanent damage caused by unsuccessful treatments or long-term side effects from aggressive therapies used in the past [9,10].

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