

Media statement

20 September 2019

Go gold for kids cancer

September is International Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, the time to put the spotlight on children's cancer, emphasising the need to work together to improve diagnosis, treatment and outcomes.

Sadly around 710 children aged 0-14 are diagnosed with cancer in Australia every year and 100 will die from the disease.

The symbol for International Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is a gold ribbon. Now an international symbol, the gold ribbon creates global unity and represents all kids diagnosed with cancer and their families. The colour gold was chosen for kids' cancer in recognition of their courage and their resiliency.

Dr Penny Cruickshanks, Paediatrician, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS), said one of the most rewarding parts of her job was witnessing the strength of the children and their families.

“Since the establishment of our regional outreach children’s cancer service at Nambour Hospital over eight years ago, we have lost count of the number of wonderful families we have celebrated with at the end of their child’s treatment. To have witnessed first-hand what a traumatic journey they have had, and then seeing them coming out of it smiling and strong says so much about the human spirit.

“Our SCHHS Paediatric Oncology Clinic allows us to provide many of our local children with some of the cancer treatment they need, right in their own backyard. Our team witness first-hand the difficult journey they must navigate, knowing we can enable them to maintain some level of normalcy, such as attending their local school or spending more time at home, is so fulfilling.”

Dr Cruickshanks said: “The model we have in Queensland promotes a shared care model, allowing the clinical expertise of the Children’s Oncology services at Queensland Children’s Hospital in Brisbane to be safely extended to the regional centres, providing accessible expert care close to home.

“A lot of chemotherapy can be done at SCHHS, as well as medical reviews and central line care. We also provide emotional support and distraction therapy for painful procedures or treatments with the expertise of our very own clown doctor’s and music therapists. The families also have access to psychology and social work service. At the clinic we monitor them after completing treatment for any after-effects from their cancer or treatment.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service

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Many team-members, such as Nicole Henson, long-standing Regional Case Manager, have remained the same over the past several years. The stability of the team is testament to the personal reward they receive being involved with so many beautiful children and families on the coast.

“Outside of the more clinical work we provide a welcoming smile, a friendly ear and open arms. Our end-of-treatment dress-up parties are a highlight, a celebration for everyone involved,” Ms Henson said.

“Sadly for a few of our families on the coast, they did not have the happy-ending we had all hoped for, it’s especially those children and their families that we remember this month. This is the reason that we need to keep the Spotlight on Childhood Cancer.”

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Interview with Dr Penny Cruickshanks and previous patient Elki (shown below at her end-of-treatment party) and her Mum Lisa.

WHEN: Monday 23 September, 11am

WHERE: Meet at SCUH main reception



ENDS

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