

# Promoting Health Equity through Equitable Access to Paediatric Cancer Care

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## Commentary

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### DESCRIPTION

Paediatric cancer remains as one of the most challenging and heart-breaking diagnoses in modern medicine. However significant strides have been made in the treatment of childhood malignancies with chemotherapy playing a pivotal role in improving outcomes and survival rates. In this commentary we delve into the principles challenges and advancements of paediatric chemotherapy highlighting its impact on young patients and their families.

Chemotherapy a focus of cancer treatment utilizes potent drugs to target and destroy cancer cells throughout the body. Unlike surgery or radiation therapy which target specific tumour sites chemotherapy is systemic making it particularly effective against cancers that have spread or are difficult to access surgically. In paediatric oncology chemotherapy protocols are carefully tailored to the type and stage of cancer as well as the age and overall health of the child to maximize efficacy while minimizing potential side effects.

One of the most significant challenges in paediatric chemotherapy is balancing the need for aggressive treatment with the potential long-term effects on growing bodies and developing organs. Children are more vulnerable to the toxic effects of chemotherapy due to their smaller size and rapidly dividing cells which can lead to a higher risk of short term side effects such as nausea vomiting hair loss and fatigue. Furthermore certain chemotherapy drugs may impact fertility or increase the risk of secondary cancers later in life underscoring the importance of careful monitoring and survivorship care.

Despite these challenges pediatric chemotherapy has transformed the landscape of childhood cancer care dramatically improving survival rates for many types of malignancies.

Advances in drug development supportive care and personalized medicine have led to more targeted and effective treatment regimens with fewer side effects. Multi-disciplinary teams of pediatric oncologists nurses pharmacists and psychologists work collaboratively to tailor treatment plans to each child's unique needs providing comprehensive care and support throughout the treatment journey.

In recent years precision medicine has emerged as a promising approach to pediatric cancer treatment, leveraging genomic and molecular profiling to identify targeted therapies that may be more effective and less toxic than traditional chemotherapy. Through initiatives such as precision oncology clinical trials and molecular tumor boards researchers and clinicians are harnessing the power of precision medicine to revolutionize the way childhood cancers are diagnosed and treated. By matching patients with therapies based on the specific molecular characteristics of their tumors precision medicine holds the potential to improve outcomes and reduce the burden of treatment-related toxicity in pediatric oncology. However access to cutting-edge therapies and clinical trials remains a challenge for many children with cancer particularly those from underserved communities or low-resource settings. Disparities in healthcare access and socioeconomic factors can impact a family's ability to pursue advanced treatments or participate in clinical research highlighting the need for equitable access to high quality cancer care for all children regardless of their background or geographic location.

In addition to medical interventions psychosocial support plays an important role in pediatric cancer care helping children and their families cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of a cancer diagnosis. Child life specialists social workers and mental health professional's work alongside medical teams to provide comprehensive support services including play therapy counseling and support groups to address the unique needs of pediatric cancer patients and their families.

In summary pediatric chemotherapy remains pivotal in the treatment of childhood cancer, providing hope and healing to young patients and their families globally. Despite the challenges and complexities inherent in treating childhood malignancies advances in chemotherapy and supportive care have led to significant improvements in survival rates and quality of life for children with cancer. Moving forward continued research advocacy and collaboration will be essential to further enhance pediatric cancer care and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive beyond cancer.