



**Last year, approximately 100 children and youth were diagnosed with cancer at CHEO**

The average number has been steadily growing each year. A higher number of relapses was also observed. While our growing population accounts for part of this increase, advancements in childhood cancer care have made once fatal relapses more treatable, giving children a chance to benefit from new treatment options. Both factors mean that CHEO is caring for more oncology patients, with more staff and resources required to meet this growing need while also caring for the over 500 children and youth in active cancer treatment each year. **Thankfully, we have you on our side.**

**Your generous donations have funded services, research and equipment that are making a real difference, such as:**

### **Soothing children and youth going through difficult times**

Thanks to community support, CHEO's Massage Therapy Program continues to help meet the needs of courageous children and youth undergoing cancer treatments. This specialized form of therapy can lower stress, ease tension and pain, reduce anxiety and help make patients feel more physically and emotionally relaxed. Last year, 26 patients received services in over 95 massage sessions. For children suffering from the side effects of cancer treatment, donors help CHEO offer therapeutic massage to alleviate some of the pain they experience.



### **Providing physicians with more resources to do their important work**

Prepping and conducting research takes a lot of time and effort, and our doctors and researchers need all the help they can get to launch studies and trials that have the potential to save lives. Thanks to donor dollars, clinical research assistants were made available for planning and administrative work, freeing researchers to spend more time on research. Dr. Nirav Thacker, who is conducting early-phase oncology clinical trials and recently opened two brain tumour studies, is one of many physicians who will benefit from dedicated assistants.

This funding also allowed CHEO to increase the involvement of Pharmacy in trials. The input and evaluation of trained pharmacists are often necessary to initiate a study and to run well-designed trials that are more likely to succeed.

### **Professional development to better serve young patients**

Last Fall, Ottawa was the host city of the 55th Congress of the International Society of Paediatric Oncology, a four-day conference reuniting oncology experts from around the world. Your donations were paramount in making that happen, giving CHEO staff the opportunity to meet and converse with their peers to share ideas, create links and discuss best practices. This level of professional development leads to quality improvements in treatment and greater collaboration between specialists in oncology, which directly benefits the children and youth who rely on CHEO as they fight cancer.

## Videos:

### Celebrating accomplishments in style



In recognition of a young cancer patient's End of Treatment milestone, staff and families celebrate at a bell ringing celebration in the Medical Day Unit. Patients are gifted with the coveted "End of Treatment" gold bead and a "Childhood Cancer Champion" medal.

Without your donations, we wouldn't have the resources to orchestrate events like these. Thank you for allowing us to properly celebrate our young patients.

### Child Life: combining play with care to make young ones feel at ease

Major surgeries and demanding treatments can be daunting for adults; just imagine how difficult and scary it must be for children. This is where CHEO's Child Life program shines, by building trust with children and youth so they always feel safe and comfortable at CHEO.

Here are a few examples of how Child Life specialists care for patients:

- Preparing children and youth for medical tests and surgery by using developmental- and age-appropriate language and medical play materials to help them get more comfortable with the test and equipment that is part of their care. (e.g., showing IV equipment or a special mask used to give anesthesia).
- Providing support and distraction during medical tests – e.g., with fidget toys, I Spy games, bubbles, guided imagery or deep breathing exercises.
- Teaching coping skills for dealing with stress and fear of being in hospital – like belly breathing and grounding techniques.
- Offering different activity options to promote a sense of choice for children and youth and to strengthen their self-esteem and independence.



### **Providing families the financial support they deserve**

Some forms of treatment can be extremely expensive, costing some families thousands of dollars per month. While there are programs and services offered by insurance companies and governments, it is sometimes not enough. This is where the donor-funded Social Work Fund comes into play. Once other avenues are exhausted, CHEO's Social Work team has access to donor funds held at CHEO Foundation to help relieve the financial burden that a cancer diagnosis can bring for families.



### **Safeguarding young cancer fighters' futures**

When a child or youth is diagnosed with cancer, the course of their life is fundamentally changed. The impact of this disease and the side effects of treatment often have long-term effects, which is why we need to offer comprehensive care that tackles both their present challenges and their uncertain future.

One potential issue that some cancer patients may encounter is loss of fertility. Thanks to your generous support, CHEO offers fertility preservation services for oncology patients whose age and situation make loss of fertility a concern. While the issue may not be top of mind for a young patient, it may someday be a priority with considerable personal implications.

### **The importance of dental assessments**

Given the weakened immune systems of cancer patients, dental assessments are crucial to recognizing and avoiding any risk of infection. Thanks to your generosity, we are able to care for and cover gaps in dental coverage for some of our most vulnerable patients.

### **Amplifying families' voices to increase quality of care**

Behind every child or youth fighting cancer stands a family ready to do everything in its power to help. No one knows a child better than their loved ones, which is why it is important to give them a place at the table and make sure their voices are heard.

The Oncology Patient and Family Advisory Council does just that, allowing current and former patients and their families to advise the oncology leadership team, staff and physicians on the needs and priorities from a family perspective.

As part of this council, members will help create new ways to increase communication between staff and families, look for ways to streamline processes to give families faster access to whatever they may need, be included in the hiring of new oncology staff and so much more.

**Your donations have made the creation and maintenance of this council possible, giving families and patients the opportunity to leave a long-lasting legacy at CHEO. ❤️**