

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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HOSPITAL STAYS FOR CHILDREN AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY CAN BE REDUCED, STUDY FINDS

DALLAS – May 3, 2001 – Under certain circumstances pediatric cancer patients recovering from chemotherapy can be treated as successfully as outpatients as they would be if hospitalized, UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas researchers report.

The study, financed by the Children's Cancer Fund and published in the journal *Cancer*, potentially could cut the time that many children must spend in the hospital after chemotherapy.

Dr. Victor Aquino, assistant professor of pediatrics at UT Southwestern, and his colleagues followed 45 Children's Medical Center of Dallas cancer patients with febrile neutropenia, a fever-inducing complication of chemotherapy in which white blood-cell counts are low enough to leave the patient susceptible to infection. The children received a single dose of the antibiotic ceftazidime and were observed for two to 23 hours before they were discharged. They then were given the antibiotic ciprofloxacin until they had gone 24 hours without a fever, had sterile blood cultures and showed signs of bone-marrow recovery.

Of the 45 patients in the study, 32 had episodes requiring treatment. All but five were treated successfully as outpatients. Of those requiring hospitalization, two were for noncompliance with doctor's orders, and three were for infections. None suffered further complications.

Children selected for the study were between the ages of 1 and 21 with their cancer in remission. All had obtained a certain minimal white blood-cell or phagocyte count, had gone more than seven days since the last course of chemotherapy had been initiated and were deemed to have reliable parents.

Also participating in the research were Dr. George Buchanan, professor of pediatrics at UT Southwestern and director of the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at Children's; Dr. Larry Herrera, visiting instructor in the Center for Cancer Immunobiology; and Dr. Eric Sandler, a former assistant professor of pediatrics at UT Southwestern.

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The study is just one project financed by the Children's Cancer Fund, which in 2000 made a \$2 million challenge gift to UT Southwestern toward the creation of the Children's Cancer Fund Comprehensive Center for Research in Pediatric Oncology.

"This gift is allowing us to recruit the best and brightest young investigators and senior research leaders," said Buchanan. "The febrile neutropenia study is helping to fulfill a basic goal and that is to discover what cancer is and what its causes are. We can't thank the Children's Cancer Fund enough."

The Children's Cancer Fund of Dallas was formed in December 1982 by parents of children being treated for cancer at Children's under the care of UT Southwestern physicians. Since then, community leaders, volunteers and medical professionals have joined the parents in their fund-raising efforts. They receive individual, foundation and corporate contributions, as well as memorial gifts.

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