



Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund

A Global Response To Childhood Retinoblastoma

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate use

Wednesday, 17 October 2007

Cancer charity brings hope and vision to children in East Africa.

The future for Africa's youngest cancer patients will glow a little brighter next month when a development team from Oxford based Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund begin formal collaborative work with medics in Kenya through their "Rati's Challenge" program. The charity is building foundations for a national retinoblastoma diagnosis and treatment program in the country, a major hub for cancer care in Eastern Africa.

The three-week mission will include meetings with the Ophthalmology Society of Eastern Africa and medics at Kenya's four main cancer treating hospitals, as well as the official launch of the National Retinoblastoma Strategy Group in Nairobi, and presentations to business and community leaders.

The DECF delegation includes Oxford-based Abby White (Chief Executive) whose father was diagnosed with retinoblastoma as an infant in Kenya, Prof. Brenda Gallie (Director of the Retinoblastoma Program at Toronto's SickKids Hospital), Morgan Livingstone (certified child life specialist, from Toronto) and Teresa Beyer (DECF US Ambassador, from New Jersey). They will be working with ophthalmologists, oncologists, pathologists, nurses and other health care workers in the Kenyan team.

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Hope and vision for cancer children in East Africa (p2).

“We are so happy that Daisy’s Fund is working with us” says Kahaki Kimani, an ophthalmologist caring for retinoblastoma children at Nairobi’s Kenyatta National Hospital. “We know that children can survive if they come to experienced doctors early, but many die because they do not reach us in time. More children can survive if a national plan is actioned - this project is very exciting and brings much hope.”

Retinoblastoma is the most common eye cancer affecting children. When contained fully within the eye, it is 100% curable with surgery, but once outside the eye, cancer cells quickly invade the brain or bone marrow, with extremely poor prognosis.

In developed countries, survival is above 96%. However, global population distribution means that 92% of affected children live in less developed countries, where childhood cancer awareness and access to appropriate medical care is severely limited. Consequently, global survival is less than 20%.

“Rati’s Challenge” evolved from the experience of a little girl who died at the age of 4yrs due to delayed and incomplete medical care in her home country of Botswana. The program aims to develop a prototype National Strategy to improve essential care - and access to that care – in resource-limited countries: a model that can be adapted and implemented around the world.

For more information, visit www.daisyseyecancerfund.org, or contact Abby White at abby@daisyseyecancerfund.org or 01865-243-654. Donations can be made online at www.daisyseyecancerfund.org/donate.

ENDS



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Hope and vision for cancer children in East Africa (p3)

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Editor's Notes:

- **Retinoblastoma** is a cancer of the developing retina that can affect one or both eyes. Tumours typically develop before the age of 4 years, and some babies are both with this cancer. Vision saving treatments include laser, freezing therapy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Many children undergo surgical removal of the eye to protect their life. Untreated, this cancer is fatal.
- **Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund** is a registered charity in England and a special fund within the charitable foundation of SickKids Hospital, Toronto, Canada. The organisation supports vital awareness campaigns, clinical research, and the development of novel approaches to sustainable, locally managed care for children in resource-poor countries, so that many more children can be saved. www.daisyseyecancerfund.org
- **Rati's Challenge** is a special program within DECF. Named after 4yr old Rati from Botswana, and established shortly after her death in August 2006, the program aims to develop sustainable strategies that can empower local physicians and families, and optimise scarce resources in developing regions of the world, and bring survival in these countries closer to that experienced in resource-rich countries. [Rati's Challenge online.](#)