



Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund

A Global Response To Childhood Retinoblastoma

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate use

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Report to be released on International Childhood Cancer Day highlights childhood cancer challenges in Africa.

Childhood cancer care in Africa is the focus of a new report, to be published on International Childhood Cancer Day, Thursday 15th February 2007, on the website of Anglo Canadian children's cancer charity, Daisy's Eye Cancer Fund (DECF).

"Rati's Challenge: Retinoblastoma In Africa" is the result of an investigational visit to Kenya last autumn by Daisy's Fund Chief Executive, Abby White, and Professor Brenda Gallie, Director of the retinoblastoma program at Toronto's SickKids Hospital.

Focusing on the Kenyan experience, the report describes the impact of childhood eye cancer on patients, families and health care systems in Africa, outlining a clear path ahead to improve care in resource limited countries.

Retinoblastoma is a fast growing eye cancer of infancy and early childhood, that is highly curable when detected and treated early, but quickly becomes fatal if not treated promptly and precisely. An estimated 92% of affected children live in less economically developed countries, where access to timely specialist care is limited, and global survival is consequently very low.

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Childhood cancer care challenges in Africa. (p2)

“Rati’s Challenge” was inspired by a little girl who died at the age of 4yrs due to delayed and incomplete medical care in Botswana. The program aims to develop a prototype National Strategy for critical care - and access to that care – in resource-limited countries: a model that can be adapted and implemented around the world.

“Our expertise becomes hollow as we realize that at most, 6% of global children in need have any possibility of benefiting from our work” says Professor Gallie. “Yet we found enthusiastic medical teams and volunteers, and great interest in our T-shirt and poster awareness campaign in Kenya. We are optimistic that simple changes can shift survival and vision outcomes in Africa closer to those of developed countries.”

“In Kenya, awareness of childhood cancer, and access to childhood cancer care is limited” says Abby White, whose father was himself diagnosed in Kenya with tumours in both eyes as an infant. “Many children abandon treatment, or are themselves abandoned, due to financial burdens. Raising awareness to achieve early diagnosis, and providing non-medical support such as accommodation near the hospital, can dramatically improve outcomes for affected children.”

Brenda Gallie and Abby White founded Daisy’s Eye Cancer Fund to proactively seek optimal retinoblastoma care for all children. The challenges in Africa are significant, but the potential for development is also great. Rati’s Challenge has made the vital first step towards a day when no child in Africa has to face death from this easily recognisable and highly curable cancer.

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Childhood cancer care challenges in Africa. (p3)

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.

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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.
- **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: Retinoblastoma in Africa" will be published on the charity's website at 2pm GMT on 15th February 2007.
- **International Childhood Cancer Day** is co-ordinated by the International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organisations (ICCCPO). The annual event highlights disparities in access to essential medical care for children around the globe, and the Importance of such care for all children, regardless of their personal circumstances.