**For the SIOP Newsletter August 2019**

A main mission of SIOP is to advocate for children with cancer and their families. In the last 12 months, two major events marked SIOP’s activities for this purpose.

**SIOP as non-governmental organization (NGO) in official relation with the World Health Organisation (WHO).** - After a long and frustrating process initiated in 2013, finally, in 2018 SIOP became an NGO in official relations with WHO. It was during the presidency of Dr. Gabriele Calaminus, that the SIOP Board embraced the idea of trying to influence the global health agenda in favour of childhood cancer by entering the world health political arena. The first step for doing so was for SIOP to achieve this WHO status. To initiate the process in 2015, SIOP and Children Cancer International (CCI) organized a side event at the World Health Assembly (WHA) to bring childhood cancer to the attention of the international health stakeholders, for the first time. This meeting was possible with the support of Russia, Ghana, the Philippines and Germany. Actually, SIOP and CCI had approached WHO together, but ultimately WHO officers recommended the two associations apply independently. Undoubtedly, CCI (most likely due to initial outreach to WHO by Mr Benson Pau from Hong Kong) and SIOP played a major role in promoting childhood cancer at the WHO political level and in preparing the ground for launching the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer (GICC). In 2016, SIOP had co-sponsored two WHO workshops, one in Myanmar with CCI, World Child Cancer, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and other stakeholders and one in Ethiopia with the Aslan Foundation, to explore strategies with local key government and health authorities and professionals for improving childhood cancer care in these countries.

To maintain our status with WHO, SIOP (with guidance from Dr. André Ilbawi, WHO technical officer for NCDs) has developed a three-year plan to support WHO’s work in a) workforce development, b) essential medicines, c) and advocacy for childhood cancer. The GICC, established in September 2018, has announced 6 initial target countries (Myanmar, Peru, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Ghana, and the Philippines) with kick-off workshops devoted to childhood cancer to prepare “technical packages” of work to improve childhood cancer survival (see below).

Having this status now SIOP can sit at the WHO World Health Assembly and independently bring statements in favour of childhood cancer to key stakeholders, funders and decision-makers in the international health political arena

**The WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer (GICC) -** In September 2018 WHO announced a new effort – the WHO GICC – with the aim of reaching at least a 60% survival rate for children with cancer by 2030, thereby saving an additional one million lives. This new target represents a doubling of the global cure rate for children with cancer. The aims of the Initiative are two-fold: to increase prioritization of childhood cancer through awareness raising at global and national levels and to expand the capacity of countries to deliver best practice in childhood cancer care. Concretely, WHO will support governments to assess current capacities in cancer diagnosis and treatment including the availability of medicines and technologies; set and cost priority cancer diagnosis and treatment programs; and integrate childhood cancer into national strategies, health benefits packages and social insurance schemes. The GICC is creating a WHO technical package to help scale-up capacities within national health systems, to be achieved with support from a host of partners. Among them are SIOP and the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in the United States, the first WHO Collaborating Centre on childhood cancer, which has committed US$ 15,000,000 to support implementation of the initiative. The WHO GICC should be considered as a landmark event for children/adolescents with cancer and their families.

The actions so far have included setting up working groups to develop WHO technical packages and ad hoc promoted workshops in selected countries of the world. SIOP is contributing to the success of this initiative by providing the expertise and knowledge of its members (mostly PODC representatives), in the abovementioned WHO GICC working groups (now concluded) and international workshops. So far, as part of the process of deploying the GICC, workshops have been organised in Myanmar and Peru. In brief, Dalvi Rashmi, current SIOP Continental President for Asia, designated Ramandeep Arora to attend the Myanmar WHO Workshop which took place on May 8th (Yangon) & May 9th (Nay Pyi Taw) 2019 along with Pernilla Pergert (SIOP nursing representative to the Scientific Committee). Lilianna Vasquéz, who is Peruvian and SIOP YI board member and Julia Challinor, SIOP Advocacy Officer attended the June 7th WHO Workshop in Peru. Further workshops will be held in Uzbekistan, Ghana, and the Philippines in the coming months.

The WHO GICC should be considered for children/adolescents with cancer and their families as a landmark event In fact, for the first time, a worldwide framework has been finally created for channelling the wide range of action to promote the survival rate of children/adolescents with cancer and is animated by multiple “subjects” in multiple countries of the world. This is a major success, and SIOP has to take a great part of the credit for this success.

From the SIOP Advocacy Committee

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