

Your Honorable Ministers, Dr. Chestnov, distinguished colleagues and friends in the global fight against childhood cancer.

On behalf of SIOP, **the** global voice for paediatric oncologists, nurses and other professional caregivers for children with cancer, I am deeply grateful and honored to have this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience.

SIOP's vision is that no child should die of cancer. For us in the childhood cancer community, this is a landmark event.

I am also speaking to you as a **pediatric oncologist**, who is caring every day for children with cancer and their families .

Every 3 minutes, a child dies of cancer. By the time I finish my statement, a boy or a girl will have lost his or her fight. Complacency and inaction must end - NOW !

My colleagues and I from every corner of the world wish to seek for your **utmost** support and commitment in ensuring that children with cancer are not neglected.

We are asking you to help us in raising awareness and enabling health systems to better respond to this very curable disease. We need your help in ensuring that the huge disparity in survival rates around the world is rectified –**NOW**.

These days, terminologies like NCDs are common place. The fact is that cancer is the number one NCD killer of children, no matter where they live.

But, so much can be done with political will and commitment from all sectors of society, and especially from you who are key opinion leaders and those who can make a **difference** in this fight.

In the last 30 years, we have learned how to treat cancer in children. We already know which tools are needed to effectively fight this cruel disease. We know what needs to be done to close the survival gap. And, at the top of this list is the urgent need for essential medicines.

Some of the most blatant inequities in access to treatment and care include:

- Ø Missed or late diagnosis leading to advanced stage disease at presentation and hence incurability.
- Ø Lack of diagnostic resources and the personnel (e.g. pathologists) to diagnose.
- Ø Lack of trained staff /ability to retain those who are trained (especially if abroad) as a braindrain.
- Ø High toxicity rates and co-morbidities (e.g malaria, malnutrition, diarrhoea etc.).
- Ø Treatment refusal/subsequent abandonment of treatment because of high costs for families to cover in LMIC.
- Ø Inadequate facilities and resources in general

"The lack of a consistent supply of reliable -quality medicines for curative, supportive and palliative care for children"- these are the basic (not "high- tech") WHO Essential Medicines list of drugs –All of these drugs are generic, off patent and if available would enable 80-90% of children to receive potentially "curative care".

Reports from pediatric oncologists colleagues worldwide reflect that WHO Essential Medicines are not consistently produced in adequate amounts to meet needs , not equitably distributed and are simply not being made affordable to families in resource-poor communities.

What are the possible solutions?

An International agreement led by the WHO on the supply and quality of the Essential Drugs

- A centralised manufacturing for some of these "Orphan" drugs.
- Essential cancer drugs to be dealt with like vaccines with financial assistance given in the short term to countries whilst they develop their own health systems and/ or National Health Insurance Schemes
- Generic companies which distribute certificated reliable drugs at production cost or at distribution cost whichever is the least expensive.

A global fund for childhood cancer to support this needed interventions

In many low and middle-income countries, 50 USD can go a long way in treating and curing children with cancer. Let us make this a reality. I am pleading for your help. It is only with your support, dedication and commitment that we will finally be able to win this fight.and reach our common vision

That no child should die of cancer....

Thank you for your attention.

Gabriele Calaminus MD

Immediate Past President SIOP

Head Global Advocacy