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Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists  
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### Childhood Cancer Awareness Month – September

South Africa joins the rest of the global community to commemorate childhood cancer awareness month in September to raise awareness about children`s cancers to reduce child mortality rate and highlight the global burden of childhood cancers.

Although, children`s cancers are not always treated like adult cancers, they are highly curable with higher survival rates in high-income countries, while the situation is different in low-middle-income countries.

Delayed diagnosis together with too few specially trained health specialists, such as doctors and nurses, contribute to low survival rates. The 2022 Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is commemorated under the theme: “**Better Survival is achievable #throughyourhands**” which serves as a clarion call for governments, non-government, and the private sector to work together to achieve at least 60% survival in low-middle-income countries and to reduce suffering of all children with cancer by 2030 worldwide.

Globally, childhood and adolescent cancer is threatening to overtake infectious diseases, as one of the highest causes of disease-related mortality in children. Despite being relatively rare, in high-income countries childhood cancer is the second most common cause of death in children aged 5 to 14 years, after accidents, whilst in Africa it does not make it into the top 10 common causes.

The month of September is considered a month of hope for better treatment outcomes, for a brighter and healthier future for young cancer patients.

Professor Gita Naidu, Chair of South African Children`s Cancer Study Group says, “Early diagnosis and availability of basic childhood cancer drugs will enable us to meet the WHO 2030 goal of an overall survival of 60% in low-middle-income countries. Childhood cancer can be cured”.

According to Dr Kibachio Joseph Mwangi, Medical Officer responsible for Non-Communicable Diseases at the World Health Organization of South Africa, “unlike in adults where screening has a huge impact on early cancer diagnosis treatment and outcome, awareness of childhood cancer symptoms by families and primary care providers, accurate and timely clinical evaluation as well as accurate diagnosis, staging and access to prompt treatment will go a long way to improve our survival rate in children with cancer”. Early detection of childhood cancer affords early diagnosis enabling a better chance of being cured and an increase in the survival rate.





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Sandhya Singh, Acting Chief Director: NCD Cluster, NDoH stresses the importance of meaningful engagement with all stakeholders in particular with children and teenagers living with cancer as well as their parents or caregivers to better understand their lived experiences and these impact on their access to care as well as the quality of survival.

Hedley Lewis, CHOC CEO says, “you have the power to make a change, no matter who you are, let’s be a voice for our children and teenagers this International Childhood Cancer Awareness Month! Our children deserve to live a full life, and we have the power to give them the chance to do so”.

The survival rate of SA has gradually increased over the past few years to about 55%, though it is still well below the rate of developed countries of 80 to 90%, and the WHO GICC 2030 goal of at least a 60% survival rate. Statistics indicate that countries may be missing some children and teens who are either never diagnosed, misdiagnosed or unreported. A key factor is the lack of knowledge about the early warnings signs of childhood cancer which are accessible in various platforms including CHOC website

Members of the public are urged to be the change for those going through the childhood cancer journey and for those who have been newly diagnosed. There are many ways people can get involved this September, in order to make a difference in the lives of children and teenagers who are on the cancer recovery journey.

**For more information and media enquiries, please contact:**

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