

PEDIATRIC CANCER CARE: *Success on Many Levels*



Pediatric cancer care at Floating Hospital for Children at Tufts Medical Center stands out for many reasons: a solid history of excellent patient outcomes, a medical staff that is available 24 hours a day for referrals and consultations and staying in regular communication with referring physicians. In addition, the service prides itself on providing an enhanced system of patient and family support that is evidenced in numerous ways, both large and small.

“Our approach is to give patients all the state-of-the-art technical power available in an academic medical center with the boutique feel of personal attention,” says John Schreiber, MD, Pediatrician-in-Chief.

The Floating Cancer Center provides comprehensive surgical, medical, radiation and transplantation services to combat the various forms of childhood cancer and blood disorders. And the results speak for themselves: the Hematology/Oncology

Division has a 90 percent overall survival rate for acute lymphocytic leukemia; 85 percent of patients treated here with this disease are still in complete remission after five years.

The center is known for its international expertise in neuro-oncology, neuroblastoma, germ cell tumors and pediatric hematology. All pediatric cancer patients are cared for by senior oncologists and are also highly served by having ready access to board-certified pediatric specialists and sub-specialists in all disciplines, including neurosurgery, radiation oncology, pediatric emergency medicine and pediatric surgery, among others. Pediatric Surgeon-in-Chief Brian Gilchrist, MD, who completed a fellowship in pediatric surgical oncology at St. Jude’s Hospital, is just one example of the talented staff here to serve the region’s sickest children.

Understanding that quick decision making is crucial when a child is diagnosed with cancer, Floating’s cancer care team

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Below is a quick referral list of Go To people in Hematology / Oncology who can address all of your patients' needs.

Howard Grodman, MD

Having performed numerous successful transplantations since 1995, Howard is the Director of the Neely Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplantation Unit.

Cynthia Kretschmar, MD

Cynthia is the "go to" neuro-oncologist for second opinions by patients and doctors both locally and nationally.

Maria Pelidis, MD

Maria provides world-class care for patients with Sickle Cell Disease, Hemoglobinopathies and Hypercoagulable states.

Brian Gilchrist, MD

Brian is the Pediatric Surgeon-in-Chief and completed a pediatric surgical oncology fellowship at St. Jude's Hospital.

Carl Heilman, MD

Carl is one of only a handful of pediatric neurosurgeons with extensive tumor experience in the city.

Cathy Rosenfield, MD

Cathy is the interim Chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology and the most sought after coagulation physician for children in New England.

DOCTOR'S NOTES

To refer a patient to the Cancer Center at Floating Hospital at Tufts Medical Center, or to learn more about the new Bone Marrow Transplant Unit for pediatric patients and their families, call 617 636-5535.

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can provide rapid first and second opinions, in most cases within 24 hours of a patient's referral.

"We are constantly trying to fulfill the Floating mission of putting patients and families at the center of everything we do," says Schreiber. "We don't expect patients to find their way through the process. We take them by the hand."

The expertise of the entire Hematology/Oncology Division is evident in its state-of-the-art bone marrow transplant (BMT) program. The program is the second largest bone marrow transplant program in New England, and Floating physicians handle the most complex cases in the region and have demonstrated success rates above the national average.

The BMT program is accredited by the Children's Oncology Group and the Federation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapies, and participates in the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplant Consortium. These essential alliances give the BMT team access to treatment protocols that are not widely available.

Led by Howard Grodman, MD, the BMT program's accomplishments are considerable. In 2007, the transplant team performed four autologous transplants on three patients; these patients are all alive and doing well with no evidence of disease. (The benchmark is 95 percent immediate post transplant survival.)

In addition, 13 allogeneic transplants were done for 11 patients. Donor sources included siblings, matched unrelated donors (MUD) and umbilical cord stem cells. Children were transplanted for neuroblastoma, solid tumors, leukemias, and for blood and bone diseases. Two patients received an experimental protocol for a very high risk relapsed solid tumor. One of these patients had an excellent response and is disease free over a year later. Six of these 13 high risk allogeneic transplants were successful and all of these patients are alive and disease free.

BMT is a procedure of "extraordinary complexity," says Grodman. But, he says, this team's success with this treatment is illustrative of the department's capacity to care for all pediatric cancer patients.

Just this year, the BMT program was further distinguished by an extraordinary gift. A beautiful new unit dedicated to pediatric BMT patients and their families was given by The Cam Neely Foundation for Cancer Care.

While BMT is a treatment option for some of the most serious types of pediatric cancers, the majority of patients will be treated successfully with surgery and chemotherapy, sometimes combined with radiation. The Floating Cancer Center is part of the Children's Oncology Group and the National Cancer Institute and the Hemophilia and Thrombosis Research Society. The professionals of Floating's Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology are continually evaluating new protocols and working together to determine which treatment is the best choice for each individual patient.

Additionally, patients benefit from Tufts Medical Center's acclaimed Radiation Oncology Department, which was one of the first clinical sites to develop and test Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy. Our radiation oncologists are extremely accessible and offer a full range of radiation services, including Northern New England's only Gamma Knife for treating brain tumors.

Beyond cancer care, the Division also provides expertise in hematological disorders, including hemophilia, von Willebrand's disease, anemias, coagulation defects, white cell disorders, hemoglobinopathies, bone marrow failure, thalassemias and sickle cell disease. Cathy Rosenfield, MD, is the most sought after coagulation physician for children in New England, and Maria Pelidis, MD is well-known for her hemoglobinopathies work.

Grodman says that he spends a good deal of time consulting with primary care pediatricians about their patients with blood diseases. Our clinic provides, free of charge, a service to referring physicians to review blood smears and provide consultation.

Working in Partnership

The team knows that the success they achieve with their young pediatric patients is dependent on and supported by the partnership they have with referring physicians.

“It’s our job to be there for the referring physicians — first as a referral source and then every step along the way during the patient’s treatment,” says Cathy Rosenfield, interim Chief of the Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology.



Howard Grodman, MD, Director of the Neely Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplantation Unit.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

Complete hematologic and oncologic services for children with all forms of malignant disease and common and uncommon hematology problems.

- **Surgical services**
- **Chemotherapy**
- **Radiation therapy**
- **Bone marrow transplantation**
 - Autologous transplants
 - Allogeneic transplants (sibling, matched unrelated donor, cord transplants)
 - Treatment of graft vs. host disease
 - Treatment of marrow failure syndromes
 - Treatment of hematologic and metabolic diseases

The Floating Children’s Cancer Center is known for an expertise in neuro-oncology, including the treatment of neuroblastoma and germ cell tumors.

We are equally expert in the treatment of hematologic disorders, including:

- **Prothrombotic disorders**
- **Bleeding disorders such as hemophilia and von Willebrand disease**
- **Anemias and hemoglobinopathies such as thalassemias and sickle cell disease**
- **White cell disorders**
- **Platelet disorders**
- **Bone marrow failure syndromes**

The team demonstrates this commitment to working with referring physicians in several ways, beginning with providing information and being in regular communication. For example, if a doctor calls in the morning, he or she gets a return call no later than that afternoon. “There’s no waiting time,” says Grodman.

And, when referring physicians do call, they speak to an attending directly, not a fellow and never a student. They get thorough feedback and they get it quickly.

“It is beneficial for us to make information available to pediatricians because the families expect it,” continues Grodman. “If we support the pediatrician with up-to-date information on all the disease and treatment issues so they can then be a resource and comfort for the patient’s family, then we’ve done our job.”

Taking Care of Everyone

The entire staff at Floating does everything they can to make very sick children—and their families—feel well cared for.

Child Life specialist Carol Farwell makes each child feel safe, comfortable, and most of all, relaxed and happy. Armed with bubble makers, stuffed toys, and 16 years of experience and tricks designed to make a child laugh and be distracted during a painful procedure, Farwell is an integral part of the hematology/oncology care team.

“At other places, child life intervenes when there is a problem,” she says. “But here, we’re a part of everything.”

Beyond her work with the young patients, Farwell—who may be more aptly called a “family life specialist”—also works with siblings and other family members, to coordinate the VIBS, which stands for Very Important Brothers and Sisters, support group. She also oversees a sibling bereavement group.

“We’re very family focused,” she says. □



BMT Unit Lets Families be Together During a Difficult Time

Parents and families of children undergoing the grueling six- to eight-week process of a bone marrow transplant procedure just received an enormous gift from the Cam Neely Foundation for Cancer Care that will make their lives a little easier. Thanks to the foundation's tremendous generosity, Floating Hospital for Children's Cancer Center at Tufts Medical Center now can offer parents a temporary home near their child's bedside.

The Neely Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, the first of its kind in New England and possibly the country, features a fully furnished and well appointed family suite inside the BMT transplant unit itself, where parents can stay while their children are being treated. A highly sophisticated HVAC system circulates clean air throughout the BMT unit and the apartments, keeping the entire area as germ-free as possible. This system, when paired with diligent hand-washing and other forms of infection control, enables parents—as well as hospital staff—to interact with children without having to wear masks and gowns.

“This goes a long way to improving peace of mind of the parents,” says Howard Grodman, MD, Director of the Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplantation program at Floating. “That translates to having children feel better, which makes the entire process better for everyone. In the past, bone marrow transplantation could be very isolating for a child, but this new unit opens things up to them and to their families. It provides for a more positive experience.”

The suite includes three parent rooms and comes complete with a kitchen, sitting area and even a washer and dryer. Its proximity allows parents to have a respite and a little time to themselves but be with their children within seconds if need be.

The patient area of the new unit is also completely renovated with modern and welcoming amenities. The unit includes five sunny new pediatric BMT treatment rooms, including one that is decorated in Boston Bruins memorabilia, in honor of Cam Neely, NHL Hall of Famer who is now part of the Bruins management group. There is also a play area for patients.

“The greatest reward of the new unit is knowing that it physically moves families closer together and increases their time together during this difficult process,” says Cam Neely, President of the Cam Neely Foundation for Cancer Care.

“This is the epitome of family centered care,” says Scott Neely, Cam Neely Foundation for Cancer Care Executive Director. “Caring for your child during hospitalization is difficult; this space takes away some of the hassles of traveling to the hospital, getting laundry done, and instead lets the family focus on being with their child. Parents and children can all rest comfortably knowing they are only steps away from each other.”

Grodman points to the unit as being one more reason why referring patients to the Floating’s Cancer Center is the right choice.

“The well-being of the entire family is very important during bone marrow transplantation. This space provides a concrete example to referring physicians and families that Floating is a unique option in the market and we tie together a commitment to the family to a commitment to excellence in bone marrow transplant success rates,” says Grodman. □



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*— Cam Neely
President, Cam Neely
Foundation for Cancer Care*

