



CURESEARCH

FOR CHILDREN'S CANCER

2023 Impact Report

Powered by hope. Fueled by research.



A message from our CEO

It's been a year of innovation and progress at CureSearch, and I'm thrilled to share inspiring updates with you in our latest Impact Report.

Your support this past year has been critical to our mission to deliver new treatments that prioritize safety and effectiveness for children with cancer. If you participated in one of our Ultimate Hikes this year, you helped us reach a fundraising milestone. Ultimate Hikers have raised more than \$10 million since the event began over ten years ago. All of these funds ensure that we can rigorously evaluate and choose cutting-edge research that will quickly provide new options for children.

Your dollars are supporting landmark research.

This year we announced three groundbreaking new projects focused on pediatric bone, blood and brain cancers where new therapies are urgently needed.

Continued progress requires collaboration among institutions that share our goal of finding a cure for children's cancer.

That's why we are thrilled to have partnered with five pediatric cancer organizations and supporters this year to establish the \$1.5 million "Fighting Osteosarcoma Together Super Grant." This project funds high-impact osteosarcoma research desperately needed to change the current decades-old standard of care.

We were proud to spearhead a new study to determine how molecular testing can guide treatment decisions and lower costs for childhood cancer patients. Collaborative studies like this improve outcomes for children with cancer.

Thank you for the continued support and trust you have placed in us. Together, we're rewriting the story of childhood cancer, one breakthrough at a time.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Koehler".

Kay Koehler
President & CEO, CureSearch for Children's Cancer

Acceleration Initiative Projects

Driving research into the clinic



Dr. Andrei Thomas-Tikhonenko

*Children's Hospital of Philadelphia,
in collaboration with the
University of Pennsylvania and
Johns Hopkins University*

Acceleration Initiative projects are ready to reach the clinic within three years. This means critical research makes its way out of the lab and into the hands of clinicians and patients who are desperately counting on it. These projects address the largest obstacles facing children's cancer research today.

Targeting cancer while sparing the good tissue

Dr. Thomas-Tikhonenko's research is focused on two high-risk pediatric cancers: neuroblastoma and diffuse midline glioma (DMG). He's working to turn specific antibodies into potentially lifesaving immunotherapeutics that target invasive cancer cells while sparing surrounding brain tissue.



Dr. David Langenau

Massachusetts General Hospital

Improving a decades-old standard of care

Rhabdomyosarcoma is the most common pediatric soft tissue sarcoma, yet despite decades of study, today's standard of care is a chemotherapy regimen developed in the 1970s. Dr. Langenau has identified a drug able to target the tumor suppressor, p53. His team also recently discovered a new cancer-associated gene that can be used to develop new therapies and guide treatment.



Dr. Gregory Friedman

MD Anderson Cancer Center

Treating deadly gliomas through combination therapy

Dr. Friedman's clinical virus, G207, has shown remarkable results by demonstrating significant tumor control and prolonged survival when combined with another immunotherapy, SNAPvax, in clinical trial patients with high-grade glioma.

Dr. Friedman and his team have identified additional antigens to target and are developing those vaccines. Working with their industry partner Vaccitech, the team has developed a flowchart for advancing to a clinical trial and is working on a clinical protocol.

Catapult Awards

Funding transformational clinical trials



Dr. David Munn

Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, in collaboration with Dr. Theodore Johnson

This project is supported in part by Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer.

Catapult Awards accelerate research out of the lab and into the clinic where it can reach the pediatric cancer patients who urgently need new treatments.

Conducting a Phase I clinical trial for pediatric brain cancer

Dr. Munn's team has successfully advanced a promising therapy- a first-in-class IDO-inhibitor drug called indoximod through early-stage clinical trials. With support from a CureSearch Catapult Award, the team will examine if adding ibrutinib can promote anti-tumor activity in brain cancer patients who are actively progressing and have already become resistant to their current treatment.

If the current proof-of-concept Phase I trial is successful, then the ibrutinib/indoximod platform would readily transfer to other tumors and chemotherapy. **This could have profound, life-changing, lifesaving impacts on end-stage patients who have previously had little or no treatment options.**

Young Investigator Projects

Funding the next generation of research



Dr. Francesca Nazio

Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesù

Young Investigator Awards support investigators who are early in their research careers and conducting cutting-edge science. Their projects are designed to deliver innovative cancer treatments toward clinical trials.

Using the immune system's natural ability to treat medulloblastoma

Medulloblastoma is the most common cancerous brain tumor in children. Natural killer (NK) cells, a part of the immune system, can target and destroy tumor cells. Dr. Nazio is combining NK cell-mediated immunotherapy with a therapeutic that stops autophagy – a process used by cancer cells to survive even when nutrients are low and they receive signals to die.

Dr. Nazio's research has uncovered that certain drugs can control the cell death process, making it easier for the immune system to destroy medulloblastoma cells.

Young Investigator Projects

Funding the next generation of research



Dr. Kristen VanHeyst

*University Hospitals Rainbow
Babies & Children's Hospital*

Improving pediatric osteosarcoma survival rates

Dr. VanHeyst is focused on finding immunotherapeutic options for osteosarcoma, a very aggressive form of bone cancer. While immunotherapy has shown promise in other types of cancer, it hasn't yet been able to offer much hope for osteosarcoma patients. With support from a CureSearch Young Investigator Award, her team is working to change that. **This project may highly impact the survival of osteosarcoma patients by offering real clinical opportunities for treatment.**



Dr. Elvin Wagenblast

*Icahn School of Medicine
at Mount Sinai*

Uncovering how and why children get leukemia

Although acute myeloid leukemia accounts for 20% of pediatric acute leukemias, it is the leading cause of death in children diagnosed with the disease. With support from a CureSearch Young Investigator Award, Dr. Wagenblast is investigating how a normal blood stem cell can become cancerous. These genetic mutations can occur in the womb before a child is even born. **His team is using state-of-the-art genome editing to understand the vulnerabilities of the disease like never before.** His team's discoveries are an incredible advancement in the study of pediatric acute myeloid leukemia.

This project is supported in part by [Team Steve: The Steven Crowe Legacy Fund](#).

Critical Stakeholder Collaborations

Working with leaders in science, academia, regulatory and industry

A key part of our mission is to drive innovative research that will ultimately lead to new treatments for kids with cancer. Real progress will require collaboration among all key players in the field.

Spotlighting molecular testing

There is an urgent need to adapt new techniques and approaches, like molecular testing. We're leading a study to uncover the molecular characterization of a patient's tumor. Armed with this information, clinicians may be able to diagnose and treat patients more accurately. The study also aims to assess the burden costs that cancer patients face.

Collaborating institutions include Day One Biopharmaceuticals, Fortrea, LabCorp, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, IPATIMUP, and Thermo Fisher Scientific.



“ Through the use of ultra-rapid, automated molecular testing solutions, we can make vital genomic information actionable for clinicians treating pediatric patients with cancer, ultimately helping impact patient outcomes.

- Dr. Luca Quagliata, Ph.D., Thermo Fisher Scientific

Strategic Partnerships

Facilitating critical conversations that drive innovation



2023 Summit: The Big Data Revolution

With artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other computational tools making an impact in various healthcare fields, the time is right to begin a meaningful dialogue about how these technologies can be implemented in pediatric oncology.

Our annual Summit brought together leaders in childhood cancer and drug development to discuss how artificial intelligence and machine learning can impact the field of pediatric oncology. Topics of discussion included:

- How Machine Learning and AI Tools Are Being Used in Medicine
- Optimizing Data Collection to Promote AI Success
- Learning from the Adult Space to Bring Machine Learning and AI to Pediatric Oncology

Learn more and watch our Summit kick-off webinar: curesearch.org/2023-curesearch-summit.

It's not often enough that leaders across pediatric cancer and drug development come together in the same room. Yet, this type of collaboration is the key to long-term change. Our one-of-a-kind engagement platforms help build community, connection, and change.



2023 PEDS: Advancing Pediatric Cancer Drug Development

The Pediatric Early Development Symposium (PEDS) brought together experts in the field to provide real-world examples and solutions relating to clinical trial design, optimization and conduct. This year's topic explored advancing pediatric cancer drug development through pharmacokinetics, modeling, and improved clinical trial design.

2023 PEDS featured speakers from the FDA, Abbvie, Baylor College of Medicine, and more!

"Collaboration, partnership, and communication. It's not anything revelatory, but the sessions reinforced the importance of these concepts across all of pediatric oncology development." -PEDS attendee

Learn more at curesearch.org/peds.

Volunteer Impact

Our driving force



Pimiento Tea Room Monthly Supper Club supports lifesaving research

Matt and Christy Griffith opened Pimiento Tea Room in 2020, transforming a historic 180-year-old farmhouse into a Holly Springs' award-winning restaurant. Shortly after opening, the couple launched the monthly Supper Club, a seven-course event where proceeds are donated to CureSearch. This year, the Supper Club raised more than \$37,000 for children's cancer research.

"It's a great way for people to enjoy a fun night out, while funding lifesaving research so that more children can have their happily-ever-afters."

-Christy Griffith, Co-founder of Pimiento Tea Room



Ultimate Hikers raise \$10M

The Ultimate Hike program achieved another incredible milestone this year, raising more than **\$10 million** since its inception! This life-changing adventure brings together dedicated supporters and hikers from across the country with a common goal – to fund cures for children's cancer.

We also launched a new hike this year in Jackson Hole, WY. The inaugural Jackson Hole Ultimate Hike surpassed its fundraising goal, raising more than \$156,000. To learn more about upcoming hikes, visit ultimatehike.org.

"The Ultimate Hike is a great way to use my passions to help others. I know that what we do on this hike is going to affect so many other lives in amazing ways, just like it did with mine."

-Caden Shrauger, Survivor & Advocate

Volunteers to chair CureSearch Community Leadership Boards

We launched Community Leadership Boards this year to drive our mission, fundraising goals and programmatic initiatives in cities and regions across the country. Each Community Board is led by a committed group of volunteer leaders with experience and expertise in business, fundraising, marketing, events, healthcare, advocacy and more.



Kara Childress
Dallas/Fort Worth Board Chair
Chief Financial Officer
Vensure Employer Services



Nicole R. Ferrera
Colorado Board Chair
Founder
HEAU



Chris Morton
Triangle Area Board Chair
HPC Queue Admin
AMS DataSerfs, Inc

If you're interested in being a leader in your community, visit curesearch.org/community-leadership-board.

Funding Partners

Amplifying the impact on childhood cancer research

Our strong co-funding model allows us to combat duplication of efforts and leverage a combined funding pool.



Dr. Patrick Grohar,

Children's Hospital of
Philadelphia

CureSearch and funding partners award \$1.5M for pediatric osteosarcoma research

The Fighting Osteosarcoma Together (FOT) Super Grant was established to support cutting-edge osteosarcoma research. We awarded Dr. Patrick Grohar of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia **\$1.5M** to develop a new targeted treatment approach for pediatric osteosarcoma, a very aggressive form of bone cancer.

This innovative project wouldn't be possible without our generous funding partners: St. Baldrick's Foundation, Battle Osteosarcoma, Michael and April Egge; The Osteosarcoma Collaborative, and the Zach Sobiech Osteosarcoma Fund of Children's Cancer Research Fund.

"I have dedicated my life to the care of patients with bone tumors. The work proposed has the potential to be highly impactful for the patients we serve. Our group is honored and humbled to have been selected for this award."

-Dr. Patrick Grohar



Team Steve Challenge raises \$100,000 for leukemia research

The Team Steve: Steven Crowe Legacy Fund was established to honor Steven Crowe who passed away from acute myeloid leukemia, and raise meaningful funds and awareness for children's cancer research.

The family launched the Team Steve Challenge in September, encouraging supporters to take on an adventure and raise funds during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. The Challenge raised **\$100,000** and will support the work of CureSearch Young Investigator, Dr. Elvin Wagenblast.

"Our family has chosen to partner with CureSearch because of their focus on driving targeted and innovative research to end childhood cancer. Supporting high potential pediatric cancer research is needed today, as much as it ever has been." -Mike Crowe, Steve's Dad



Samduro event supports Ewing sarcoma research

In August, the Sam Schneider Legacy Fund hosted its 2nd annual Samduro event, a fundraising Enduro bike race in Colorado established to honor the vision of Sam Schneider who passed away from Ewing sarcoma. Sam was an avid mountain biker and in his final months, began planning an enduro race to ensure his vision for childhood cancer research and awareness persisted after his passing.

To date, the Sam Schneider Legacy Fund has raised more than **\$185,000** for children's cancer research.

"Throughout Sam's treatment, he refused to give up or give in. Instead, he was the epitome of bravery, love, and perseverance. He is deeply missed, but we continue to honor him and his desire to raise awareness of Ewing sarcoma."

-Beth Schneider, Sam's Mom

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Our impact would not be possible without the extraordinary support of our partners, their generous employees and their customers.



Celebrating Ten Years of Brave Barbie

One of the most heartbreaking things that cancer takes from kids is their ability to play, to smile, and simply just be a kid. For 10 years, Brave Barbie has been a friend to children going through treatments and experiencing changes such as hair loss. More than 2,000 dolls are distributed by CureSearch each year to children impacted by cancer, thanks to this impactful partnership with Mattel!

“ Brave Barbie is given to children that are going through difficult cancer treatments so that they can see themselves and feel comforted that they’re not going through this alone.”

-Nancy Molenda, Executive Director of Mattel Children's Foundation & Corporate Philanthropy

WATCH:
Brave
Barbie
[Anniversary](#)
[Video](#)



Corporate Partners Go Gold in September

In honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Vensure Employer Solutions launched a CureSearch Gold fundraiser to support cures in September. The company also partnered with the Arizona Diamondbacks and \$5 of every ticket sold for their September 30th game was donated to CureSearch.

Busy Bee stores encouraged customers to “round up” their purchase totals at the register September through November. Since 2019, Busy Bee has partnered with CureSearch for Children's Cancer to raise funds in their award-winning travel centers throughout Florida and Southern Georgia.

Knockaround Sunglasses also helped raise funds during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month by donating \$5 of every purchase made September through October to CureSearch.

Thank you all for supporting the development of safer, more effective treatments for kids with cancer!

