2023 Impact Report
Powered by hope. Fueled by research.
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.

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

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.

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.
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.

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.

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

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 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.

Dr. Francesca Nazio
Ospedale Pediatrico Bambino Gesù

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.

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

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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.
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
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.

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

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**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.

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**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 funds 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](http://ultimatehike.org).

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“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

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“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](http://curesearch.org/community-leadership-board).
Amplifying the impact on childhood cancer research

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.

“Our 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.
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
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!