

**Report to Tildy's Trust on Research Nurse Focusing on Paediatric Drug Development in  
Leukaemia at the Royal Marsden  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2013**

**Overview of Drug Development** - The last six months has been a very successful period for the Paediatric Drug Development Unit at the Royal Marsden (RM) and three studies of new drugs have been successfully completed and fourteen new studies are starting. In particular the number of new drugs being studied in leukaemia has increased from three to nine. The RM has contributed the largest number of patients to an important international study that has just closed and will be presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) meeting in June. The RM has also contributed the largest number of patients to a UK study which has just been completed and will be soon submitted for publication. The Paediatric Drug Development Team is currently opening 14 trials of new anti-cancer drugs for solid tumours and leukaemia. In addition there are over twenty trials in preparation.

**Recruitment to position** - We have been exceptionally fortunate in appointing two very senior, highly experienced and outstanding nurses (Beth Leach and Anna Massey) to job share this position. Both have worked extensively in early clinical trials before and are very motivated, innovative and conscientious. These two nurses focus on leukaemia and are key to explaining the exact nature of the studies to the families after initial discussion by the doctors, and to successful delivery of the studies.

**Early studies in Leukaemia** - There has been substantial progress in driving forward early clinical studies for leukaemia over the last six months. Previously there was one study for acute leukaemia and two studies for chronic myeloid leukaemia. There has been a great focus on portfolio expansion and the Paediatric Drug Development Unit is now opening six new studies (five for acute leukaemia, [three for lymphoblastic leukaemia and two for myeloid leukaemia] and one for chronic leukaemia). These new drugs offer great promise and the aim is that they will increase the number of new drugs available for children with leukaemia at presentation. One drug in particular has great potential. This new type of drug comprises two different antibodies directed against the leukaemia cell; these antibodies engage T cells to kill leukaemia cells. However, this drug has different side effects to existing drugs and children receiving it require increased nursing care. The appointment of Beth Leach and Anna Massey will help deliver this study and other studies which require increased research nurse support and specialist infrastructure. In addition to opening the new studies, we are completing existing studies and continue to be one of the lead recruiting centres to these studies. We also continue to offer all newly diagnosed and relapsed leukaemia patients enrolment into the Cell Bank programme whereby leukaemia cells from bone marrow tests, which are not required for diagnosis can be used for research, including investigations at our partner The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), with a view to developing more novel drugs for children and young people with leukaemia.

**Contact and referral with other centres** – At present one third of children receiving new drugs come from outside London and the south east of England. As, for a number of these new studies the RM is one of the very few centres open in the United Kingdom, referral from other centres will be of even greater importance. To facilitate this, the team have

started a series of visits to Children Cancer Centres in the United Kingdom. There has been a very successful visit to Southampton and visits to Cambridge and Oxford are planned.

#### **Conclusion**

There is a major expansion in the number of new studies for children with leukaemia; this would not have been possible without funding from Tildy's Trust.