
4 out of 5 – A Childhood Cancer Switzerland solidarity campaign

Campaign

Medical success in the treatment of childhood cancer means that 4 out of 5 children in Switzerland can be cured. Nonetheless, after accidents, cancer is still the second most common cause of death in children. A diagnosis of cancer is a shock for the whole family, and the resulting battle against the disease is not just demanding in physical terms, but also often poses a considerable psychological and financial burden.

On 1 September 2018, Childhood Cancer Switzerland is holding a Make a Wish initiative as part of its campaign to raise public awareness of the issue of childhood cancer and all that it entails, and to create a wave of solidarity with those affected. The organisation, which provides information on many aspects of childhood cancer, is asking everyone to show their concern for and solidarity with children suffering from cancer and to register their personal wish for an affected child or his or her family on its website. The more often the campaign is shared in social media, the wider the reach of the message will be. Childhood Cancer Switzerland will send a selection of the most beautiful messages to the specialist children's hospitals to encourage all those affected. The children and adolescents themselves, and their parents and siblings, need to know that they are not alone in their fight.

Campaign sponsors

The sponsor of the campaign is the Childhood Cancer Switzerland umbrella organisation and its member organisations:

- Association romande des familles d'enfants atteints d'un cancer ARFEC
- Childhood Cancer Research Foundation Switzerland
- Kinderkrebshilfe Schweiz
- Swiss Childhood Cancer Registry SKKR
- Swiss Paediatric Oncology Group SPOG
- Stiftung für krebskranke Kinder, Regio Basiliensis

Campaign objectives

- For people to understand that children with cancer and their families urgently need support

- To increase awareness of the specific needs of children and adolescents with cancer in terms of medical treatment, psychosocial care, research and follow-up
- For interested parties to show their solidarity with those affected by thinking up a personal wish for a child or adolescent with cancer and to actively share this action in social media

Campaign messages

- Even now only four out of five children and adolescents with cancer in Switzerland can be cured. This means that cancer is still the most common illness to cause death in childhood – only accidents claim a higher toll.
- Children and adolescents with cancer and their families face huge challenges during the treatment. The health-related and financial pressures are high. Often the patients are young children who desperately need their parents at their side during treatment, yet at the moment working mothers and fathers are not allowed to be off work for longer than 3 days. Many of them worry that they will lose their job because they need to take time off.
- The families incur high additional costs for hospital visits, insurance excess charges, travel to hospital, meals away from home, childcare for siblings and psychosocial support, which are not covered by their insurance. There are also some medications that health insurers will not pay for.
- From a medical perspective, the biggest challenge in treating cancer is not only to heal the disease, but also to reduce the long-term physical and psychological side-effects as much as possible.
- To give children and adolescents with cancer better chances of survival, we need specific research, clinical studies and new medicines developed especially for them.
- There is still a lack of specific medical and psychosocial services for survivors to ensure that, as far as possible, they have equal personal, professional and economic opportunities despite their illness.

Strategy

The main features of the awareness-raising and solidarity actions carried out by Childhood Cancer Switzerland are:

- the personalised Make a Wish initiative
- the viral spread of the initiative in social media
- the use of online banners on various portals and websites linking to our initiative
- placing advertisements in selected media
- sending information about the current campaign to around half a million Swiss households
- linking the campaign thematically to the survivors' "We Can Days" (August) and the "Race for Life" event (September)

Background

Research is crucial for children with cancer

Children and adolescents in Switzerland who have cancer are treated at nine specialist centres. The challenge is to minimise the long-term side effects of the aggressive therapy as far as possible. In most cases, the medications were not developed for children and adolescents. Clinical trials are urgently needed to ensure that they can be used for treatment in a scientifically controlled manner.

In addition, specific research projects aimed at introducing new treatments and medicines are essential for types of cancer that up till now have had a poor prognosis or where severe adverse effects occur. For this reason, Childhood Cancer Switzerland is represented in European research projects and lobbies for improvements in the medical care provided for children and adolescents with cancer.

Self help – Supporting affected families in everyday life

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer in children and adolescents is a stressful experience for everyone concerned. Children and adolescents with cancer spend months travelling between their home and hospital. During the treatment, the children and their parents are under enormous strain – not just in terms of their health, but also financially and psychologically.

Parents' organisations and foundations work to support families. For example, they pay the costs of travel between the home and the children's hospital, overnight stays, childcare for siblings, or costs arising from arranging meetings to exchange experience and recuperate.

Childhood Cancer Switzerland is also involved in political issues such as campaigning for paid care leave for parents, the financial support of families and the reimbursement of all medication costs by health insurance providers.

Follow-up care to ensure a good quality of life after cancer

Many people who had cancer in childhood continue to suffer as adults from the physical and psychological effects of the disease and its treatment. To ensure that these survivors can continue to enjoy a good quality of life in the longer term, an important aspect of optimising oncological therapy is reducing long-term complications.

The long-term complications of cancer treatment can take many forms: growth disorders, cardiovascular disease, disrupted hormones, infertility, cognitive impairment and an elevated risk of developing a second cancer. Survivors need targeted individual follow-up so that these complications can be identified at an early stage.

By launching the "Suivinet" internet platform and introducing the "Survivorship Passport" in Swiss children's hospitals, Childhood Cancer Switzerland has set benchmarks for improved information, counselling and networking of survivors and the establishment of systematic follow-up. As a partner of the University of Lucerne, the organisation is supporting a scientific study into the concrete needs of Swiss survivors, and it represents the interests of survivors in international bodies.

About Childhood Cancer Switzerland

In 2015, several renowned childhood cancer organisations joined forces and created the umbrella organisation Childhood Cancer Switzerland (KKS) to improve the situation of children and adolescents with cancer, survivors and their families with regard to medical treatment, research and follow-up care.

Childhood Cancer Switzerland works to raise awareness among the general public about the situation of children and adolescents with cancer and their families. It sees itself as a mouthpiece for its member organisations, and works at national level to represent the interests of parents, survivors, research organisations and support foundations that are active in the field of childhood cancer.

For more information, please visit: www.4von5.ch

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