

MEDIA RELEASE

BIOMEDE, A NEW INTERNATIONAL BRAIN CANCER TRIAL FOR CHILDREN, IS NOW AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology/Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) is pleased to announce that the latest European trial for Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), one of the deadliest forms of paediatric brain cancer, is now available for Australian children. The BIOMEDE (Biological Medicine for Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma Eradication) trial has been developed by leading international paediatric oncology trial researchers, within the European trial consortium "Innovative Therapies in Children with Cancer (ITCC)".

Paediatric brain tumours comprise 20-25% of childhood cancers. Of these, DIPG carries the worst prognosis and - despite numerous collaborative studies undertaken over the past three decades - remains incurable. Sadly, less than 10% of patients are alive 2 years after diagnosis. Radiotherapy is the only therapy that has shown some effectiveness against DIPG but the benefits are only transient.

More and more frequently, cancer treatment is becoming personalized, using the molecular analysis of tumours to tailor treatment based upon the identification of a biological target (when active compounds are available). Preliminary work by members of the ITCC provided the foundation for the development of the BIOMEDE trial, using biopsies from DIPG tumours to identify three molecular targets. Children enrolled in the BIOMEDE study will undergo biopsies to identify the presence of a specific therapeutic target *prior* to their allocation to a treatment arm. The trial will compare the efficacy of three investigational agents - each with a different molecular target and supported by promising preliminary data - in combination with radiotherapy on the survival of children diagnosed with DIPG.

Funding from Cure Brain Cancer Foundation and the Isabella & Marcus Foundation has enabled the complex set-up phase of this trial to be completed in Australia and New Zealand, and their continued support will ensure the trial will be opened at all Australian and New Zealand children cancer centres that treat children diagnosed with DIPG. The Navzad Memorial Foundation provided additional, vital support to the Australian lead centre, the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

"This is an exciting opportunity for Australian and New Zealand children to access the latest therapies for DIPG, which – without the support of Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, the Isabella & Marcus Foundation and Navzad Memorial Foundation – would only be available in Europe," said Associate Professor Geoffrey McCowage, BIOMEDE's Australasian principal investigator. "BIOMEDE represents a huge leap forward in the way we treat DIPG, with the ability to perform biopsies to analyse each child's tumour and then treat based on the molecular target. This will enable us to test existing therapies, and also provides the framework for rapidly incorporating new agents into the trial as they become available."

Cure Brain Cancer Foundation CEO Michelle Stewart said, “The prognosis families face when their child is diagnosed with DIPG is heartbreaking and unacceptable, and the last thing they should have to consider is travelling overseas at great expense and emotional strain. We have always sought to ensure Australian patients have access to the most promising new treatments right here at home, and thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we’ve been able to do that for children with DIPG.”

Rob De Rose, Co-founder of The Isabella and Marcus Foundation commented, “When a child is diagnosed with brain cancer the first question asked by parents is, ‘What is the chance my child can be cured?’ Currently, for DIPG the response is that it’s incurable and radiotherapy is the only proven treatment that can extend your child’s life. Parents need to have hope, something to fight for. We’re pleased to be able to offer families in Australia and New Zealand the latest experimental therapy for DIPG that tailors the treatment to each child, offering parents hope.”

BIOMEDE is the first ITCC trial to be opened in Australia, and is currently available at the Children’s Hospital at Westmead, with additional Australian and New Zealand children’s cancer centres to open the trial in the coming months.

For more information about Cure Brain Cancer Foundation, please visit their [website](#).

For more information about Isabella & Marcus Foundation, please visit their [website](#).

For more information about Navzad Memorial Foundation, please visit their [website](#).

For more information about the BIOMEDE trial, please contact ANZCHOG (info@anzchog.org)

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