

'Treatment alliance' needed to save more children's lives from cancer

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Experts are calling for an urgent change to approaches for treating and researching childhood cancers, to continue to save more children from the disease.

Today nearly eight in 10 children diagnosed with cancer in Great Britain now survive for five years or more, compared with fewer than three out of 10 in the 1960s. This has been thanks to [conventional treatments](#) such as [chemotherapy](#), but these improvements have plateaued in recent years.

A new 'treatment alliance' that will bring together researchers, [pharmaceutical companies](#), [regulatory authorities](#) and patients and their parents will be discussed today (Saturday) at this year's SIOP conference, organised by the International Society for Paediatric Oncology. The conference brings together over 2,000 leading childhood cancer specialists from across the globe for a three day conference in London.

This 'alliance' will identify and focus efforts on the unmet needs of patients – from developing new and targeted treatments that directly benefits patients, ensuring patients have access to these latest treatments and giving companies incentives to develop new treatments.

Professor Kathy Pritchard-Jones, a childhood cancer specialist at University College London and Great Ormond Street Hospital, said: "Cancer in children is a very unique disease, with many treatments

designed for adults not suitable. Saving more children's lives from the disease can only be achieved by collaborative research across continents, as more and more, new treatments are focused on small groups of patients based on the [molecular characteristics](#) of the cancer.

"Only by bringing together this 'treatment alliance' can we make the next leap in saving more children from cancer. Only in this way will the needs of these children be met first."

The substantial improvements in survival after childhood cancer mean that there are around 26,000 people alive in Great Britain who have survived for five years or more, so the need to reduce the long-term side effects is hugely important for these survivors.

Professor Pritchard-Jones added: "It's not just successfully treating the cancer that counts; our ultimate ambition is to maximise the chance of survival while minimising the side effects of treatment. This is what our patients demand of us and what we must strive to achieve. A cured [childhood cancer](#) survivor has 65-70 years ahead of them to achieve their full potential."

Kate Law, director of clinical research at Cancer Research UK, said: "We welcome this push to accelerate the development of new treatments for childhood cancers. The UK has been at the forefront of bringing new treatments to children with cancer and today thousands more children have survived the disease than would have done 30 years ago. Clinical trials are essential for making new treatments available to [children](#) with cancer, and Cancer Research UK is campaigning to cut the red tape that's hindering clinical research across Europe, while maintaining a safe environment for [patients](#)."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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