

## Going the Distance

How far would you go for a cure to help your child? Parents with sick children will work relentlessly and travel endlessly to aid them. ACHRI researchers are there to help with their talent and time, but their research requires funding. From the generosity of individuals, organizations, and foundations to the competitive nature of industry sponsors and governmental agencies, ACHRI researchers contend and receive for funding to help children everywhere. For federal agencies, many factors determine the amount money allocated for research support. As funding levels are never certain, scientists and physicians make their voices heard to decision makers to ensure adequate support. Along with their appeals, a voice more moving is heard, the voice of children and families impacted by research and the need for it. Among these families is one of an Arkansas teen.

Lori Ann and Scott brought their daughter Palmer to Arkansas Children's Hospital in February 2005 for treatment for acute myeloid leukemia (AML). "We've got doctors with Palmer's best interest in mind," says Lori Ann of Kimo Stine, MD, and David Becton, MD, of ACH's Hematology/Oncology unit. Dr. Stine is Palmer's primary physician; Dr. Becton is the ACH site Principal Investigator for the Children's Oncology Group (COG), an NIH-funded consortium. COG consists of 235 hospitals in the US and Canada and 15 additional hospitals in other countries conducting clinical trials and performing research to identify cancer causes and to pioneer treatments and cures. While the number of patients at any one center is small, banding the data from the collaborating sites together provides enough data to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment.

"We didn't realize there were clinical trials for AML," says Lori Ann, "Drs. Stine and Becton told us one way to treat Palmer was to put her on a research study with COG." The family studied various trials and made the decision for Palmer's course of treatment. "We felt it was the best protocol," she says. "The primary reason was for the best cure rate; secondary was that she would be followed and studied throughout." Their experience with the trial was positive. "We felt like we were not on our own," Lori Ann says. "You trust your child is on the best drugs possible and you will help another child down the road."



Palmer (middle), with her parents at a recent visit to ACH.



Palmer and her parents visit with Dr. Kimo Stine (left) and Dr. David Becton (right).

This mother's words are backed with action. In June of 2007, Lori Ann and Palmer went to Washington, DC, as part of CureSearch's "Reach the Day" event. CureSearch unites COG and the National Childhood Cancer Foundation with the purpose of reaching the day when every child with cancer can be guaranteed a cure. Mother and daughter met with Arkansas's congressional delegation to educate them about the importance of research. They presented research statistics and personal testimony to why research funding levels must continue without decreases. "Research dollars are limited," Lori Ann explains, "for trials, doctors have to choose from patients rather than offer it to all."

"Dr. Stine and Dr. Becton are willing to collaborate with other physicians about cases at their hospitals and here...as advocates, we are doing whatever we can," Lori Ann says about her family. They have appeared in newspaper articles and on television news. Palmer also has a web site so family, friends, and others can follow her progress and learn about her disease.

Since their return from Washington, Palmer has relapsed and is now diagnosed with t-cell acute lymphocytic leukemia. "From diagnosis to remission to relapse to treatment...it's not been an easy road," says Lori Ann. About ACH she says, "We do feel that we're at a great place. We would go anywhere for Palmer, but we're getting great care here." This family has and continues to journey near and far to help their child, and their commitment is also helping other children and cancer researchers.



Established in 1989, Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute provides an on-site research environment for faculty of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences working on the Arkansas Children's Hospital campus. Over 120 pediatric researchers with expertise and experience that span the breadth of medical disciplines comprise ACHRI's roster of investigators who work to fulfill its mission to improve children's health, development, and well-being through high quality research. For more information, visit <http://achri.archildrens.org>.