

Media Release

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**Clinical
Oncological
Society of
Australia**

Young cancer patients failing to receive the best cancer treatment

Adolescent and young adult cancer patients are experiencing a reduced survival rate because they are failing to be involved in clinical trials, a meeting of national cancer experts will hear today (Thur. 15/11)

The UK Teenage Cancer Trust's visiting professor, Dr David Walker, said young people who did take part in medical trials, sometimes were not on the most appropriate trial for their cancer type.

"International research indicates that adolescent and young adult leukaemia patients who have been involved in child cancer trials are nearly twice as likely to survive the disease than those involved in adult trials," he said.

"Young people will often have child cancers, but are too old to be treated in children's hospitals by specialists who see these cancers frequently. They are usually treated by doctors in adult hospitals who rarely see those types of cancers and therefore are often unaware of child cancer treatment trials. So, we are seeing a significant under representation of young people in child cancer trials."

Dr Walker said that while many young people had "child cancers", the remainder had adult type cancers; young people may have been receiving treatment based upon evidence derived from proven treatments on much older people.

"For example, if an adolescent has lung cancer, they will receive treatments based on research involving patients that are in their 60s. This may not be the best treatment for someone in their teens or early 20s. We need to see a greater representation of young people in adult cancer treatment trials so that treatments can be better tailored to young people."

Dr Walker said the problems could be overcome by paediatric oncology specialists and those in general oncology sharing knowledge about the latest medical treatments for adolescents and young adults.

Oncology treatment wards specifically for adolescents and young adults were already in place in a number of UK hospitals. "In an ideal world we would have specialist adolescent and young adult cancer wards in every major city, visited by paediatric and adult oncologists," he said. "While this should be explored in Australia, in the meantime oncology specialists will have to work together to share information."

COSA President Professor David Goldstein said Australian governments were increasingly recognising the need to identify specific treatment pathways for adolescents and young adults. "COSA is working with bodies such as Cancer Australia to effectively deal with this issue," he said.

[Dr Walker will present at 5.30pm today \(Nov 15\) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting. Meeting Room 10, Adelaide Convention Centre.](#)

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