



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
June 12, 2018

Provincial Health Services Authority
BC Children's Hospital

BC Children's Hospital joins international collaborative to further the development of innovative immunotherapy treatments for kids with hard-to-treat cancer

Vancouver, BC — BC Children's Hospital has joined [CureWorks](#), an international collaborative of leading academic children's hospitals focused on improving care for children with hard-to-treat cancers by expanding clinical trials and accelerating the development of leading-edge immunotherapy treatments.

Every year in BC, approximately 150 kids are diagnosed with cancer. Thanks to rapid and significant advances in cancer treatments, 80 per cent of kids are now expected to survive. For the remaining 20 per cent, who have cancers that are difficult to treat with traditional therapies, immunotherapy provides new hope.

Immunotherapy trains a patient's own immune cells to recognize and combat cancer cells. Working with the newly formed Seattle Children's Hospital-based CureWorks, researchers at BC Children's will further the science of a promising type of immunotherapy called chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, add to the body of knowledge around this innovative treatment, and develop expertise within the research institute and the hospital.

"We're proud to be the first Canadian partner in CureWorks," said [Dr. Kirk Schultz](#), oncologist and Director of the [Michael Cuccione Childhood Cancer Research Program](#), BC Children's; and professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of British Columbia. "This partnership will give BC kids with few treatment options access to innovative immunotherapies through clinical trials close to home."

The first CAR T-cell clinical trials will launch this fall at BC Children's and will initially be available to children with certain types of leukemia that are no longer responding to conventional treatment.

"Our partnership in CureWorks puts BC Children's ahead of the curve when it comes to bringing the next advance in cancer treatment to BC kids," said Dr. Schultz.

This partnership was made possible through the generous support of the Michael Cuccione Foundation (MCF) and the Government of BC. In 2017, the Province committed \$2 million to MCF to support advances in research at the Michael Cuccione Childhood Cancer Research program and expand access to CAR T-cell immunotherapy for hard-to-treat cancers.



“Our precious late son Michael Cuccione started this foundation in hopes of finding a cure for childhood cancer. He inspired us to never give up,” said Gloria Cuccione, Executive Director, MCF. “The CAR T-cell immunotherapy clinical trials bring new hope to sick children in BC which is a dream come true.”

“We are proud to continue to fund the Michael Cuccione Childhood Cancer Research Program at BC Children’s and are blessed to have the support of so many wonderful people to continue Michael’s legacy,” said Ms. Cuccione. “Together we make a difference.”

CureWorks aims to accelerate the development of new immunotherapy treatments through the power of collaboration so children with cancer can grow up to realize their full potential. The members include BC Children’s Hospital Research Institute, Children’s National Health System in Washington D.C., Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and founding member, Seattle Children’s.

BC Children's Hospital Research Institute conducts discovery, translational and clinical research to benefit the health of children and their families. We are supported by BC Children's Hospital Foundation; are part of BC Children's Hospital and the Provincial Health Services Authority; and work in close partnership with the University of British Columbia. For more information, visit www.bcchr.ca or follow us on Twitter [@BCCHRResearch](https://twitter.com/BCCHRResearch).

BC Children's Hospital, a part of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, youth and young adults, including newborns. Child and Youth Mental Health provides a diverse range of specialized and one-of-a-kind tertiary mental health and concurrent disorders services for children, adolescents and young adults across the province. For more information, visit www.bcchildrens.ca or follow us on Twitter [@BCChildrensHosp](https://twitter.com/BCChildrensHosp).

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information, visit www.phsa.ca or follow us on Twitter [@PHSAofBC](https://twitter.com/PHSAofBC).

-30-

Media Contact:

Stephanie Dunn
Manager, Research Communications
BC Children’s Hospital Research Institute
604.875.2401
sdunn@bcchr.ca