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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

## Aim is to cure every child

Teens living proof of "leaps and bounds" in cancer research  
By JOHN GILLIS Health Reporter

Forty years of research, evolving drug treatment and technology have produced good news for the 10,000 children in Canada living with cancer today: Three out of four will live.

But it's hard for the parents of a child diagnosed with cancer to take those odds as optimistic, Dr. Paul Grundy, head of the cancer centre at Edmonton's Stollery Children's Hospital said in Halifax on Friday.

"That's not even close to good enough," he told a Childhood Cancer Foundation research information breakfast.

Dr. Grundy, who's also head of the so-called C17 research network of Canada's pediatric oncology centres, said by joining forces the network aims to one day cure every child in Canada who develops cancer.

The two-year-old network, whose members treat every Canadian child who has cancer, creates the opportunity for multi-centre, multidisciplinary research, he said.

Cancer in children is relatively rare compared to adult cancer, so it's difficult for oncology programs to gain experience with various forms of the disease or do research with a limited number of patients.

Harriet Lye and Meghan Walsh, University of King's College students and cancer survivors, told Friday's breakfast gathering what they owe to advances in cancer research.

At 15, Ms. Lye, of Toronto was diagnosed with a rare form of acute myelogenous leukemia. Ms. Walsh, of Moncton, was diagnosed with osteosarcoma at 14.

Both are now cancer free at 19.

"We are living proof of the leaps and bounds in research," said Ms. Lye.

Ms. Walsh had the same form of cancer as Terry Fox 25 years earlier. Even 10 years ago, amputating an affected limb was almost automatic, but she survived and kept her leg.

"Comparing the outcomes of both, it is clear that research dollars have led to major advances," Ms. Walsh said.

Ms. Lye said her leukemia combined with natural-killer cell cancer was the first ever seen in the world.

"The technology did not exist just six years ago for the doctors to properly diagnose the type of leukemia that I had, and if that wasn't there I would have been treated for a different kind and not be here."

At Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, where Ms. Lye was treated for seven months, patients are given a



Cancer survivors, Harriet Lye, left, and Meghan Walsh speak at the Childhood Cancer Foundation breakfast on Friday. (Tim Krochak / Staff)

" It's kind of fun  
to do the  
impossible. "

Walt Disney

"bravery bead" for each procedure they endure.

After almost 100 blood transfusions, five rounds of intensive chemotherapy, a liver biopsy that caused internal bleeding and a fungal infection in her lungs, Ms. Lye had a 1.5-metre ring of beads.

Ms. Walsh required four major surgeries at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, including a 19-hour procedure to save her leg, and spent four months in a rib-to-toe cast to beat her cancer.

Dr. Grundy said the C17 network aims to improve the quality of life for children during and after treatment, in addition to finding cures and tracking the incidence of cancer.

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