

Dear Friends of The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders:

As you know, in the fall of 2015 Dr. Ray Watts was appointed chairman of Pediatrics at LSU in New Orleans and I assumed the role of interim director of the Division of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology at UAB. A national search was launched to recruit the future leader of the division and is still underway.

I came to UAB as a fellow in pediatric hematology-oncology in 2003 after completing my pediatrics training at Vanderbilt. I fell in love with the community and was thrilled to join the faculty in 2006 as the Medical Director of our survivorship program, the Taking on Life after Cancer clinic. Over the years, new opportunities to give back to the division arose and I assumed the leadership of the Fellowship Training Program from my mentor Dr. Roger Berkow. Since assuming the role of interim director, I have come to better understand and appreciate the team it takes to achieve our goals. Here are some of the exciting developments occurring this year at the Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders:

- Dr. Gregory Friedman's innovative phase 1 study using a modified virus to attack difficult to treat brain tumors will begin recruiting patients from all across the country this spring. Dr. Friedman's trial is the culmination of many years of hard work that began when he was a fellow here and is the true definition of developmental therapeutics, with the hope for more effective and less toxic treatments for our children battling brain cancers.
- Dr. Julie Wolfson will build on her work which seeks to understand and address disparate outcomes in adolescents and young adults (AYA) diagnosed with cancer. During the upcoming year she will focus on understanding the outcomes of AYA patients diagnosed and treated here in Alabama.
- Dr. Avi Madan-Swain's Hope and Cope Program continues to provide integral support to our families as they face cancer or blood disorders. She has long been an advocate for the healing role the arts play in our treatment and will add drama activities to her music and art therapies.
- Our Taking on Life after Cancer survivorship clinic will expand from 1 day a week to 3 days a week to meet the needs of our survivors and continue to explore the late effects of childhood cancer therapy and to develop interventions to help our survivors live their lives to the fullest.
- Dr. Jeffrey Lebensburger, working with our hematology section, will pilot a daytime pain clinic for our sickle cell patients in efforts to decrease admissions for pain management and improve their quality of life.
- The solid tumor/developmental therapeutics program continues to offer improved and innovative treatments for those patients with the most resistant forms of cancer, and we are actively working to expand and grow the program with the recruitment of additional faculty.

As proud as we are of our accomplishments thus far, we truly believe with the help of our community partners, the most meaningful advancements are yet to come and are within our grasp. Thank you for giving us these opportunities and trusting in our work. I welcome a chance to tell you more about our work. Please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

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The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders
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