



“There’s currently little we can do for children with recurrences. SurVaxM has the potential to change that. It could become the new therapy standard. And this clinical trial we’re seeking to run testing in pediatric patients would be the only one of its kind in the nation.”

— Robert Fenstermaker, MD
Chair, Department of Neurosurgery

Bringing Much-Needed Hope TO CHILDREN WITH BRAIN CANCER

Roswell Park has a chance to help more kids live through two terrible kinds of childhood brain cancer whose survival rates have not improved in a decade.

Cancer medicine has made a lot of progress in treating pediatric cancers like leukemia and lymphoma, whose five-year survival rates are now 80 to 90 percent. But the brain cancers glioblastoma and medulloblastoma only have a 20 to 30 percent five-year survival rate in children, and after a relapse, that drops to only 10 percent.

Existing treatments — beginning with surgery and followed by radiation and sometimes chemo — too often also leave behind neurological devastation in children who do survive.

Roswell Park is in a unique position to launch a clinical trial of a promising immunotherapy that could start saving more kids’ lives.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

In the past several years, Roswell Park has pioneered a treatment fighting adult glioblastoma in clinical trials of a vaccine called SurVaxM.

Developed right here at Roswell Park by Robert Fenstermaker, MD, Chair of Neurosurgery, and Michael Ciesielski, PhD, Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery, SurVaxM looks for cells that express a protein called survivin and stimulates the immune system to kill those cells. Studies show that up to 80 percent of brain cancers produce cells that express survivin.

We’ve learned a lot from our SurVaxM clinical trials in adults. It’s well-tolerated, meaning it has minimal side effects; and it has been successful in extending life beyond the average for this patient population. In some cases patients are still alive today, more than five years after they started treatment with SurVaxM. At the same time, studies at other cancer centers have shown survivin-targeting therapies for other cancers to be safe in children.

This means that a vaccine that has the promise of helping more people survive — AND comes with minimal side effects — could be life-changing and lifesaving for some of our youngest patients.

But we can't wait any longer.

"We have young patients right now who we feel could benefit from SurVaxM, and the trial would be open to patients across the country. This could be their last hope, and we need to get this trial started. There are three patients currently undergoing palliative care at Roswell Park alone because there are no other options for them," says Laura Wiltsie, MD, Clinical Fellow in Pediatrics at Roswell Park.

HOW WE GET STARTED

The first step is to launch a clinical trial here at Roswell Park treating recurrence in pediatric patients who have surviving medulloblastoma and malignant glioblastoma — and prove that SurVaxM will help fight their disease.

After that, we hope to run a phase II trial studying SurVaxM in children newly diagnosed with these brain cancers. But that is further down the road. Doctors believe it may also work in other solid tumors that are hard to treat, so those are critical possibilities to explore as well.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donations to Roswell Park are funding the SurVaxM clinical trial for adults. **Now children across the country need your help, and they need it now.** They can't have access to this promising treatment option until we raise the funds needed to cover this critical clinical trial.

This all hinges on philanthropic support from donors like you. You can help change that heartbreaking survival rate in children with these brain cancers. You could give parents one more option to help their child.

"This gives hope," says Dr. Wiltsie. "And hope is what we do."



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The Roswell Park Alliance Foundation raises and accepts all contributions to benefit Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, one of only 50 comprehensive cancer centers in the U.S. and the only one in Western or Upstate New York.

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"These are kids who, with the chemo and the radiation they get, are nauseated and vomiting and can't go to school, and can't do any of the regular things other kids are doing. So being able to replace current treatments with a vaccine that has minimal side effects so they can just be kids — that's a hopeful prospect in the treatment of these cancers."

— Laura Wiltsie, MD

