

NEWS OF HEALTH

Progress Against Childhood Cancers

(NAPS)—Dispelling a few myths about children and cancer may help put many minds at ease.

For example, a common perception is that it is unsafe to treat brain tumors in children under three with radiation therapy, reports Dr. Thomas Merchant. He's Associate Member and Clinical Director, Radiation Oncology at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which has the largest brain tumor program in the world that is devoted exclusively to children. Dr. Merchant has successfully treated children as young as 12 months.

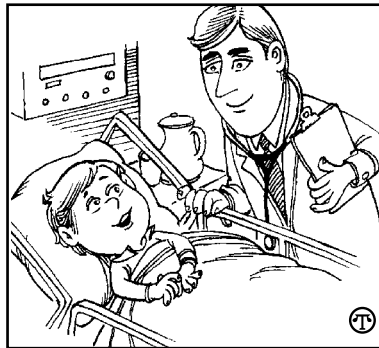
A second notion, he says, is that radiation therapy always decreases IQ in children by 10 to 15 points. Dr. Merchant has pre- and post-treatment test results that show no loss in IQ for the majority of his patients.

A third misconception is that radiation therapy causes many other problems. With pre-treatment studies, Dr. Merchant finds 50 to 68 percent of children have existing hormone deficiencies, before radiation.

More good news is that the radiation therapy St. Jude uses to treat these children helps them recover faster. Because the equipment, developed by Siemens Medical Systems, is able to deliver highly complex treatment quickly, the treatment time is greatly reduced, in some cases down from over an hour to 10 to 12 minutes. This means the young patients need less anesthesia, the treatment is safer, and they are able to go back to being their normal selves within an hour of treatment.

This is just one way the hospital meets its goal of bringing research and treatment together.

Another is its innovative method for viewing tumors. With state-of-



Thanks to the latest medical technology, St. Jude has made cancer treatment, easier, faster and better for many children.

the-art spiral scanners being widely available, the scan time has been reduced which makes it more comfortable for patients undergoing a procedure, particularly small children. The open environment of the CT scanner also makes it easier to examine small children since claustrophobic feelings are eliminated. "Instead of moving the patient, or enclosing him in a tube for scanning," says Dr. Barry Fletcher, chairman of St. Jude's Department of Radiology, "the patient is in the open on the table and the scanner moves around him. It has made an incredible difference in the time needed for a scan. It means that many of our patients need no sedation for such a procedure."

The hospital treats children from all over the world, free of charge regardless of their ability to pay. You can learn more about St. Jude, how it helps children and how you can be part of this effort online at www.stjude.org.

Additional information about oncology patient care can be found at the Siemens Oncology Care Systems Web site: www.siemensoncology.com.