

## JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists  
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### International Childhood Cancer Awareness Day – 15 February

**Pretoria:** The Department of Health urges health care workers and communities to be aware of the SILUAN warning signs for childhood cancer. This will allow for early detection and effective management of childhood cancers which will result in better outcomes.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) more than 1000 children are diagnosed with cancer every day around the world. It is estimated that 1000 new cases of child cancer are recorded annually by the South African Children's Tumour Registry, but many are missed and do not receive treatment.

Parents, educators, general practitioners and paediatricians play a crucial role in early detection of childhood cancers. It is important to know the early signs of childhood cancers which include a white spot in the eye or sudden blindness; lump on any place on the body mostly on the stomach or stomach; unexplained fever or weight loss; aching bones and easy fractures; and a change in walk and contiguous headache with or without vomiting.

The country joins the global community to commemorate International Childhood Cancer Day to raise awareness about childhood cancers and to express support for children and adolescents living with cancer, the survivors, and their families. The common childhood cancers in South Africa are Leukemia, Lymphoma, Brain tumours, Eye and Kidney tumours.

The Day is observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February annually to highlight the vital role of community engagement and support in addressing the complexities associated with childhood and adolescent cancer.

The department in collaboration with the South African Association of Paediatric Haematology of Oncology (SAAPHO), WHO and CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation SA acknowledge and commend the significant contributions made by various stakeholders, including the medical community, civil society, parent groups, non-governmental organisations and individual members of our society.

Hedley Lewis, CHOC CEO has said, "these contributions provide crucial support to children and adolescents with cancer, survivors, and their families. Cancer impacts negatively on siblings and other family members. The challenges faced by these families extend beyond medical treatment, encompassing emotional, physical and social, financial, educational, and long-term health effects".

According to Professor Gita Naidu, Chair of South African Association of Paediatric Haematology Oncology, there is a need to raise primary health care and community awareness of the SILUAN Early Warning Signs of childhood cancers especially amongst parents, caregivers and educators.



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Early diagnosis and swift referral to treating centres is imperative to improve the outcomes of this dreaded disease. Childhood cancer is curable, but only if diagnosed and treated timeously”.

The WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer (GICC) was launched in September 2018 with the aim of improving overall survival to 60% globally by 2030 and allowing these children and adolescents to live and die without pain and suffering. South Africa remains committed to focusing on childhood cancer and is aligned with the WHO-GICC goals.

SAAPHO and CHOC are hosting SIOP Africa in Johannesburg from 4-8 June 2024, and this create an opportunity to share knowledge, collaborate, engage with stakeholders nationally, on the continent and globally with the aim of improving the lives of children and adolescents with cancer.

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