



PACT microscope to make teaching larger than life at Sheffield Children's Hospital

25th August 2007

Children's Hospital charity PACT has funded a new microscope for the Hospital's Haematology Department and hopes to see benefits for doctors, students, parents and children alike.

PACT – the Parents' Association of Children with Tumours and Leukaemia - is a small charity working within Sheffield Children's Hospital to support families affected by cancer or leukaemia. As well as organising family trips and running the PACT House to help keep families together through long periods of treatment, the charity also raises funds to support the medical staff working on the wards and the research staff working to beat cancer once and for all.

At £12,500, the Nikon 50i microscope PACT has funded for the Children's Hospital doesn't come cheap, but it does magnify blood cells by up to 1000 times. With five million cells in a cubic millimetre of blood, that's some serious equipment, and vital in the analysis of blood samples to track the progress of illness and treatment.

Beryl Welburn is Co-ordinator for PACT. She explains: "We've got to fight cancer from every angle we can, and it's important to us not just to support parents and families through their children's illnesses, but also to support the doctors, nurses and laboratory staff working with them. Everybody here works as a team, and if we can help the Hospital get the best possible equipment, we're helping students get the best possible training, doctors get the best possible information and ultimately children and families get the best possible care."

PACT Press Release

The microscope will join four others in the Haematology laboratory, which processes and analyses blood samples. One person looking forward to the addition is Dr Rod Hinchliffe, who runs the lab.

He says: "For me, the main benefit of this microscope will be the scope to teach groups of students with the most accurate and high quality images available. Usually teaching with a microscope has to be on a one to one basis with teacher and student constantly switching round to view the images. This model has a digital camera attached and we can project the image onto a larger screen. That means that more people can see the images in more detail. The better the picture the easier and quicker it will be for all staff to learn how to recognise and diagnose different blood abnormalities.

"With leukaemias and lymphomas timing can be critical, but more importantly if you're a parent waiting for news, any delay is agonising. Our aim is to provide a quick and most of all accurate service for doctors, parents and patients, and this microscope will help us continue to do so."

Beryl concluded: "I'm delighted we've been able to make morphology – the analysis of blood cells – larger than life for the laboratory staff and students! This is one of the best teaching hospitals in the country, and it's great that PACT has been able to make a contribution to that work."

Ends

Notes to Editors

PACT is a registered UK charity (number 508412).

The PACT office address is :

Sheffield Childrens' NHS Trust
Sheffield Childrens Hospital
Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TH

For more information, please contact the PACT office on 0114 272 4570 or email pact@sch.nhs.uk

PACT Press Release

1. PACT (Parents' Association of Children with Tumours and Leukaemia) was founded in 1977 - with a donation of £113 - when eight parents created a support group for families whose children had cancer. The charity expanded its remit to include children with leukaemia in 1978 and, as funds were secured, services grew to include new ideas like the provision of equipment and facilities for families.
2. In 1977 a child with cancer had a 55% chance of being alive 10 years after diagnosis. Today that has improved to more than 75%. However the cost of this is often prolonged and intensive treatment and sadly this is not always successful. PACT continues to be an invaluable source of practical and emotional support for children and their families throughout their contact with the oncology unit.
3. In 1990 the idea to provide a home from home for families where they could be close to children undergoing treatment became a major project. A house at Western Bank, only minutes away from the hospital, has 5 en-suite bedrooms and 2 lounges and has been in continuous use since 1998.
4. The outlook for children with cancer has also come a long way since 1977. Then fewer than 60% of children with cancer were treated in a regional centre. Today more than 90% are referred to specialist centres such as Sheffield Childrens Hospital. Although this means that children receive the treatment they need it does mean that many families have to travel a long distance from home for treatment, others spending many weeks in hospital. The PACT house has gone a long way to helping many families by providing a welcome respite from the stress of hospital.