

## NOTE FOR THE MEDIA

### SIOP and ICCCPPO call on governments to scale-up commitment in fighting childhood cancer

Geneva | 4 February 2013 – Today, on World Cancer Day, the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP) and the International Childhood Cancer Confederation of Parents Organizations (ICCCPO) are calling on governments and ministries of health worldwide to intensify their efforts in fighting childhood cancer by strengthening child cancer care systems in their respective countries. The two organizations represent over 1500 pediatric oncologists and 158 parent support organizations, representing nearly 85% of the world's population.

One of the most fundamental approaches to closing the survival gap for children with cancer in resource-poor and resource rich countries is the early detection of cancer. Childhood cancers are often left undetected until it is too late. The 2013 World Cancer Day theme "Cancer - Did you know?" aptly captures the strategy that both societies have been advocating for in the past several years. An early childhood cancer detection campaign was launched by both organizations in 2012. Children with cancer can be spared from some of the effects of the most intensive treatments if their disease is diagnosed early and treatment begun properly. Public education and awareness campaigns, provided that there will be access to treatment, can successfully increase the rate of early diagnosis, even in low- and middle-income countries.

SIOP and ICCCPPO are calling for coordinated action in the provision of appropriate treatment, care and support for children with cancer especially those who live in resource-poor countries. Governments and partners at national level are encouraged to join forces to ensure that childhood cancer is diagnosed early and accurately and that measures to ensure this are in place. Sadly, cancer in children is often not seen as a healthcare priority, especially in regions where they have to cope with HIV/AIDS, malaria or other childhood illnesses such as polio.

Education and training are key elements in the fight against childhood cancer. The exchange of knowledge and information about childhood cancer need to take place. Twinning programs on childhood cancer, i.e., between countries of affinity (north-south/south-south) must be encouraged and supported. "We call on more governments to partner with ICCCPPO members, as some are doing already, to run awareness campaigns to inform, not only the public, but health care professionals as well, on childhood cancer and its early warning signs," say Kenneth Dollman chairperson of ICCCPPO. Treatment strategies and regimens common in developed country settings should be adapted and implemented in resource-poor countries. There have been conclusive results showing higher rates of survival when this happens.

As SIOP president Gabriele Calaminus notes "evidence is there. We do not need to re-invent the wheel. Action must be taken now!"

National healthcare systems of many developing countries need to be responsive to the needs of children with cancer and their families. The training of new health cadres must include curricula on childhood cancer. It is important to put into place measures to ensure the retention of these health professionals.

Governments and national health systems must pay close attention to the issue of health professional exodus – they need to ensure that they retain this important and vital segment of the population.

**For more information, contact:**

Marianne Naafs-Wilstra  
ICCCPO c/o VOKK  
Schouwstede 2B, 3431 JB Nieuwegen  
NETHERLANDS  
Tel: +31 30 242 2944  
[icccpo-secretariat@vokk.nl](mailto:icccpo-secretariat@vokk.nl)

Jose Julio Divino, MPH  
Senior Adviser, Advocacy and Communications  
SIOP Secretariat  
1-3, rue de Chantepoulet  
1211 Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: + 41 22 906 9123  
[advocacy@siop-online.org](mailto:advocacy@siop-online.org)

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**About SIOP**

Established in 1969, the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP), with over 1500 members, is the lead organization concerned with the issues of children and young people who have cancer. The society envisions that “no child should die of cancer.” To realize this vision, SIOP’s mission are to: (1) ensure that each child and young adult with cancer has access to state-of-the-art treatment and care; (2) ensure that all involved in childhood cancer worldwide, have access to the latest progress through meetings, networking, and continuing professional development; (3) support those caring for children and young adults with cancer to provide the best curative and palliative therapies; and, (4) advocate for appropriate long-term follow-up for children and young adults after treatment for cancer. Dr. Gabrielle Calaminus is the president of SIOP. SIOP is governed by a board of directors and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. [www.siop.nl](http://www.siop.nl)

**About ICCCPO**

The International Childhood Cancer Confederation of Parents Organizations (ICCCPO) is the largest organization of its kind representing families of children with cancer. ICCCPO wants to see a world where the issues faced by children with cancer and their families, both in the short and long-term, are understood by families, healthcare professionals and the wider community to ensure that children receive the best possible care wherever they are in the world at the time of diagnosis and beyond. ICCCPO's mission is to share information and experiences in order to improve access to the best possible treatment & care for children with cancer everywhere in the world. [www.icccpo.org](http://www.icccpo.org)