



## School Reintegration of Oncologically Diseased Children Attendance to the home school accompanied by doctor

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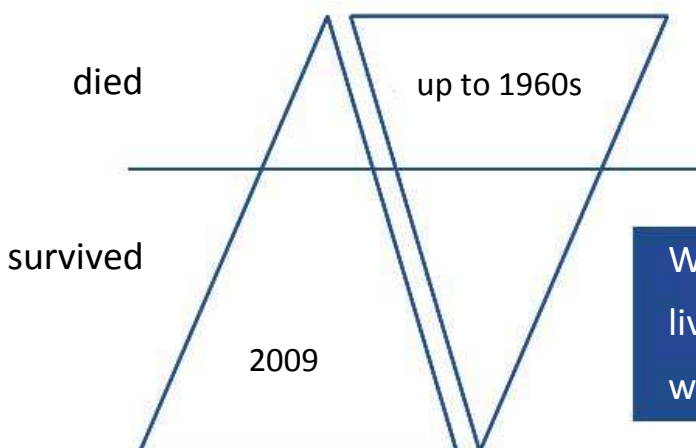
Teacher at School for Sick Children, Munich

The project "School reintegration of oncologically diseased children" was begun in October 2007 in the paediatric oncological department of the Schwabing Clinic in Munich with the objective of facilitating the reintegration of affected child and adolescent patients within their school environment. A teacher from the state school for sick children and a paediatrician visit the class at the patient's home school in order to inform pupils and teachers about the illness, dispel misconceptions, address fears and help to maintain the contact to the affected fellow pupil. Successful integration in school and social environment is decisive for the further professional and psycho-social development of the patient.

The special feature of this project is the accompaniment undertaken by a female doctor working in the paediatric oncological department who is familiar with the medicinal environment and thereby provides authenticity, expert knowledge and the authority of the doctors' white coat. Particularly in the age of modern media, we are frequently confronted with highly detailed medical problems, but also with serious misinterpretations and fallacies. It is the combination of education and medicine which permits a detailed clarification of the situation and the provision of competent information on the specific illness packaged appropriate to the age of the schoolchildren.

### Facts and figures

5-year survival rate of ca. 30% at the beginning of the 1960s  
has risen to >81% in 2004



We have to care that  
live quality of surviving people  
will be optimized.

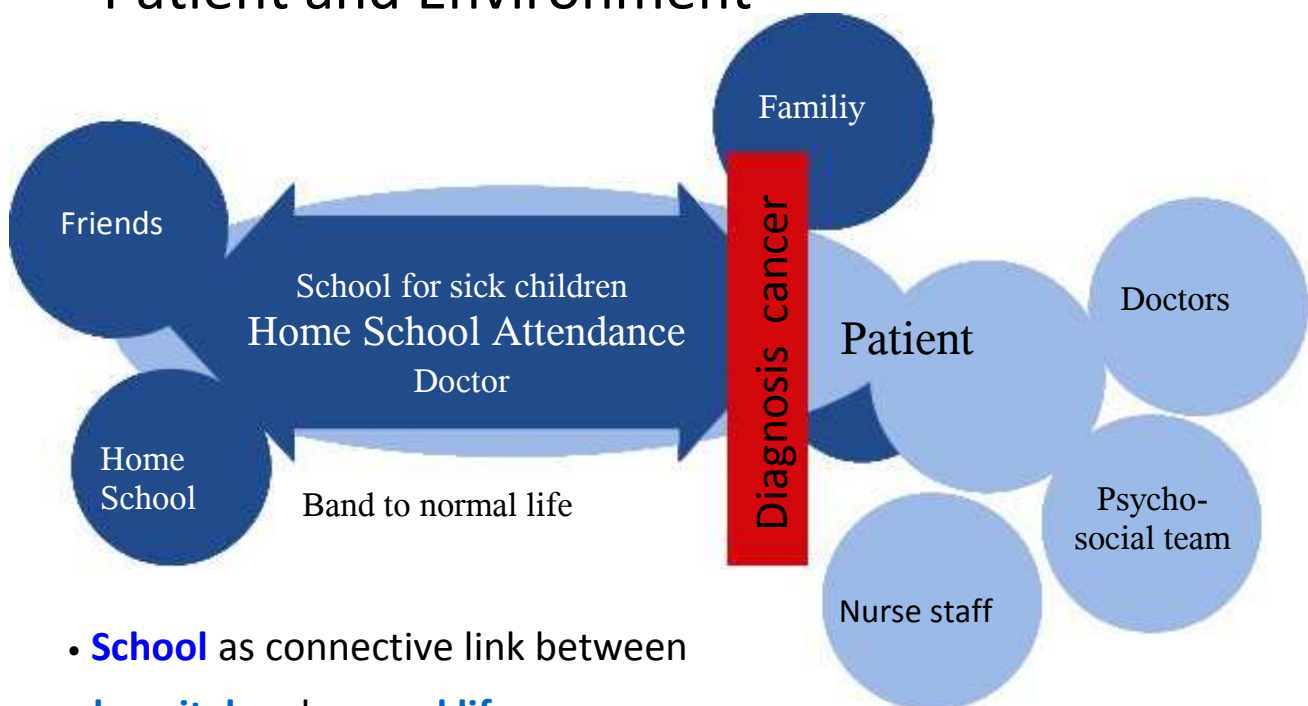


- 1,800 new cases of illness annually in Germany
- 1 in 500 children will be diagnosed with a form of cancer up to their 15th birthday
- In Schwabing ca. 60-80 new cases in all age groups
- In the USA, ca. 250,000 survive an oncological illness during childhood: the figure for Germany is 30,000
- According to projection calculations, 1 in 250 young adults between the ages of 15 and 45 will have survived an oncological illness during childhood in 2010

## Psycho-social situation of the child

- Children and adolescents are suddenly uprooted from their social environment, family and school
- Most sensitive period in their life – detachment from parental home – puberty – peer pressure – definition of individual personality through dissociation
- Sudden confrontation with:
  - Illness, pain and anxiety
  - Death
  - Disfigurement and mutilation
  - Social isolation
  - Fear of failure at school and in professional career
- ANXIETY RAGE HATE DESPAIR POWERLESSNESS RESIGNATION
- Loss of future perspectives

## Patient and Environment



- **School** as connective link between **hospital** and **normal life**



## Project Home School Attendances

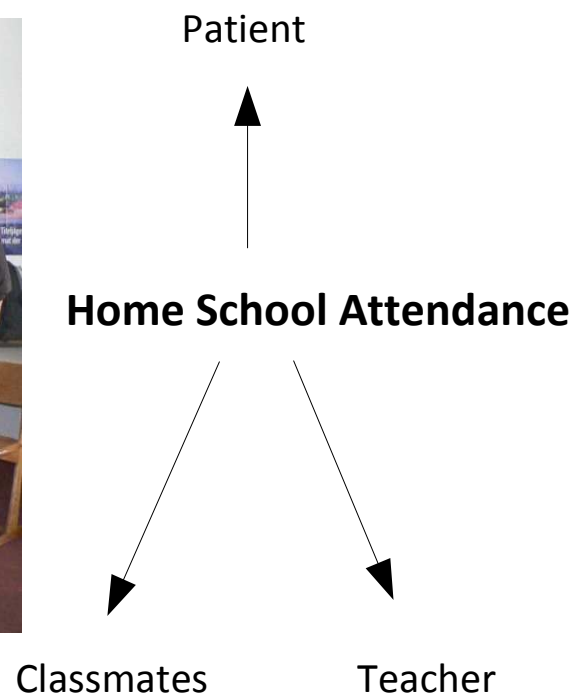
- 1 female teacher and 1 female doctor to cover both medical and educational aspects
- Our treatment does not end with the final dose of chemotherapy
- Apart from Tübingen, this is the only concept of its kind in Germany with the combination doctor/teacher
- Visits at the beginning of the illness and at the end of therapy (targeted, but not yet sufficient resources)
- financing of the doctor exclusively from donations

## Aim

- Contact between patient, hospital and home school
- Information on cancer as an illness explained appropriate to the relevant age-group
- Reduction of fears and misconceptions on the part of pupils, parents and teachers
- Reduction of fears surrounding contact with illness and patient
- Avoidance of isolation of patient through insecurity, ignorance and alienation: “access to hospital”
- Smooth transition period in the return to the class community
- Educational topic integrating illness and death into everyday social life

Non scholae sed vitae discimus.

We believe in the life of children!





## Why home school visit with a doctor?

- Authenticity
- Practical experience through clinical work in paediatric oncological unit
- Specialised competence
- Authority of white doctors' coat



## Principle questions asked by pupils

- What type of illness is cancer? What sort of cancer?
- What is the origin of the illness?
- Is the illness infectious?
- Will xxx recover? Will xxx die?
- Can I also get this illness?

## Principal statements

- Cancer is very rare in children.
- Cancer in children is easier to treat than in adults. The survival chances are substantially better than for adults.
- Cancer is not infectious.
- No-one is responsible for the illness and no-one has done anything wrong.

## When is a visit to the home school necessary?

1. Visit to the home school at the beginning of the acute phase
2. Visit to the home school on the patient's first day back at school following the end of therapy
3. Visit to the home school possibly in the case of palliative care or following death



## Practical realisation

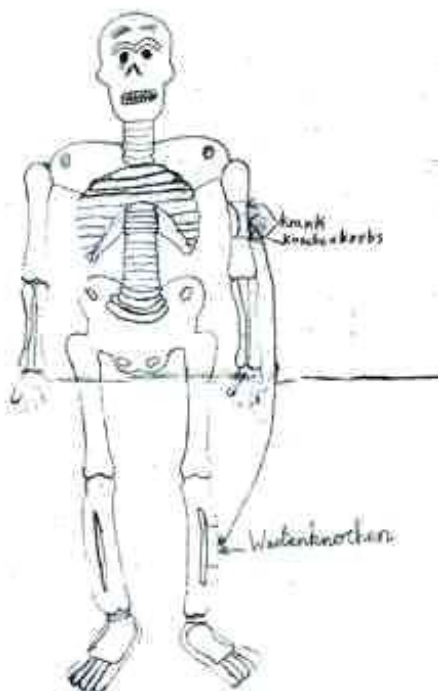
- Creation of a structure which will facilitate the reintegration of the patient in his or her school environment
- Education and information of classmates and teachers; reduction of fears; retention of contact with patient
- Accompaniment of children to school

## Home school visits – classmates

- Education in social competence
- Reduction of fears and misconceptions
- Reduction of stigma and exclusion
- Acquisition of openness and understanding of interpersonal behaviour through factual information on bodily functions and the psychological effects of illness

## Implementation – the illness of the classmate

- medical history
- diagnostics
- diagnosis
- therapy
- side-effects
- ??? prognosis





Implementation – questions asked by the c

- on the illness
- on the origins of the illness
- on therapy/hospital
- on prognosis
- on the classmate
- on hospital school

Age-specific module 1

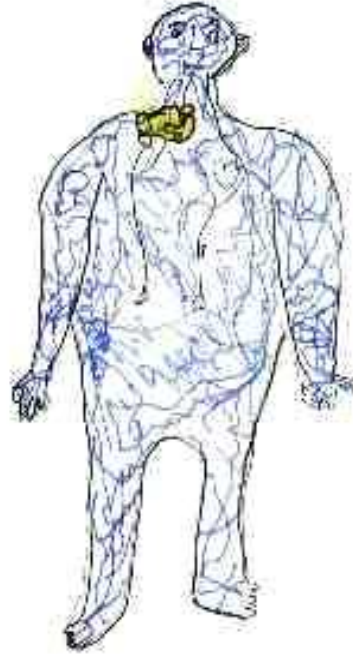
Primary school

- everyday life in hospital
- being ill / understanding handicap
- body awareness and understanding
- retaining contact

Age-specific module 2

Middle school: mind maps

- friendship, peer group
- individual qualities of a person
- self-determination/being dependant
- new media: making known v. privacy



Sie haben es Schöngemacht den Vortrag





## Age-specific module 3

### Sixth form: abstract topics

- medical-scientific: new therapies
- prevention and screening
- school certificate – value within society, future perspectives



Electron microscopy of immune cells

### Advice for teachers

- compilation of individual help plan for the situation-specific adaptation of school requirements
- compensation for disadvantages, marks, school reports, change of school type

### Investigation of the effects of home school visiting

- Responses of classmates, teachers, patients and parents