

New treatment hope for one of the deadliest childhood cancers

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Cancer Research UK doctors have launched a new trial which offers a new type of molecular radiotherapy - never before tested in children - for one of the deadliest childhood cancers.

The new treatment for [neuroblastoma](#) uses radiotherapy which piggy-backs on a drug that naturally attaches itself to [neuroblastoma cells](#). Neuroblastoma is usually diagnosed in [children](#) aged five and under, and the aggressive form of the disease remains very difficult to treat successfully.

Around 24 patients between 18 months and 18 years old will be treated in the LuDO neuroblastoma trial, at University College Hospital, London. The treatment will be delivered directly to the tumour in up to four courses once every eight weeks.

This treatment is effective in adults with other [cancer](#) types, but this is the first time it has been tried in children with neuroblastoma.

Dr Mark Gaze, lead researcher on the study at the University College Hospital, said: "For far too long

there has been too little progress for the patients I see every week. But in the last year we have finally seen new treatments become available, and new [trials](#) have been launched to tackle this terrible disease. We have real hope that this method of radiotherapy may be particularly effective and offer a new treatment option for these children."

Harri Norman from Newport, south Wales, was just two years old when he was diagnosed with neuroblastoma in March 2012. He underwent months of treatment including chemotherapy, surgery and even a [stem cell transplant](#) and was just getting to the end of his treatment when the family received the devastating news that he had relapsed. In May last year he had to restart [treatment](#) and now he has been put on the LuDO trial.

His father Mike, said: "It is terrifying when your child is sick and options start running out, so we jumped at the chance to be on the LuDO trial. Not only does it give Harri the best chance possible, but it also gives hope to other families whose children may benefit from this trial."

Neuroblastoma develops from nerve cells, and there are around 100 children diagnosed with this type of cancer each year in the UK. Despite the numbers of children surviving neuroblastoma rising from around 40 per cent in the 1980s to 60 per cent today, the majority of children have a high-risk form of the disease which is still very hard to cure.

Bettina Bungay-Balwah, Chief Executive of NCCA UK (Neuroblastoma Children's Cancer Alliance UK), said: "Far more work is needed to make improvements for children with neuroblastoma, and this trial goes a long way towards addressing this need. After funding the first phase of this trial, we are incredibly grateful that Cancer Research UK has provided the funds to continue this potentially life-saving work. We will continue to work with organisations focused on treating neuroblastoma to

ensure that research continues in the future."

Kate Law, Cancer Research UK's director of clinical research, said: "Although three quarters of children with cancer are now cured compared with around a quarter in the late 1960s, more work is needed to discover better treatments. The LuDO neuroblastoma trial joins the BEACON neuroblastoma trial as vitally important steps towards better and kinder treatments for children with neuroblastoma."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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