



MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital FY23 Year in Review

Prom Party Palooza returned in spring 2023 after a pandemic hiatus. Patients, their siblings and other guests danced the night away. Seen here: Geovany, Jaylan, Audrey, Catherine and Samantha taking a break from the dance floor.

Letter from division leaders



Richard Gorlick, M.D.
 Division Head

Thank you. At The University of Texas MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital, our Fiscal Year 2023 was filled with innovation and inspiration. While much of that is owed to our dedicated faculty and staff, you also played a prominent role. Yes, you, the reader — so thank you.

To the donors who fund cutting-edge research, you are helping to develop new therapies for rare cancers. To the community members who lend support through collaborations, you are providing special opportunities for our patients. To the referring physicians who trust us to care for those patients, you are ensuring continuity of care that gives young individuals their best chance to live a healthy life.

MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital is a special place for many reasons, and you are among them.

This FY23 Year in Review highlights our accomplishments across many settings: in the clinic, in our research laboratories, in education settings, as extensions of our support programs and at special events. We are also privileged to share stories from our courageous patients and survivors who are doing amazing things to make a positive difference in the world. We hope their unique perspectives inspire you as much as they inspire us.

On behalf of children, adolescents, young adults and families who are facing cancer, we look ahead with determination and optimism, knowing that advanced standards are on the horizon. To everyone who plays a role in our mission to save lives, thank you.



Aaron Walton, M.P.A., C.R.A.
 Division Administrator

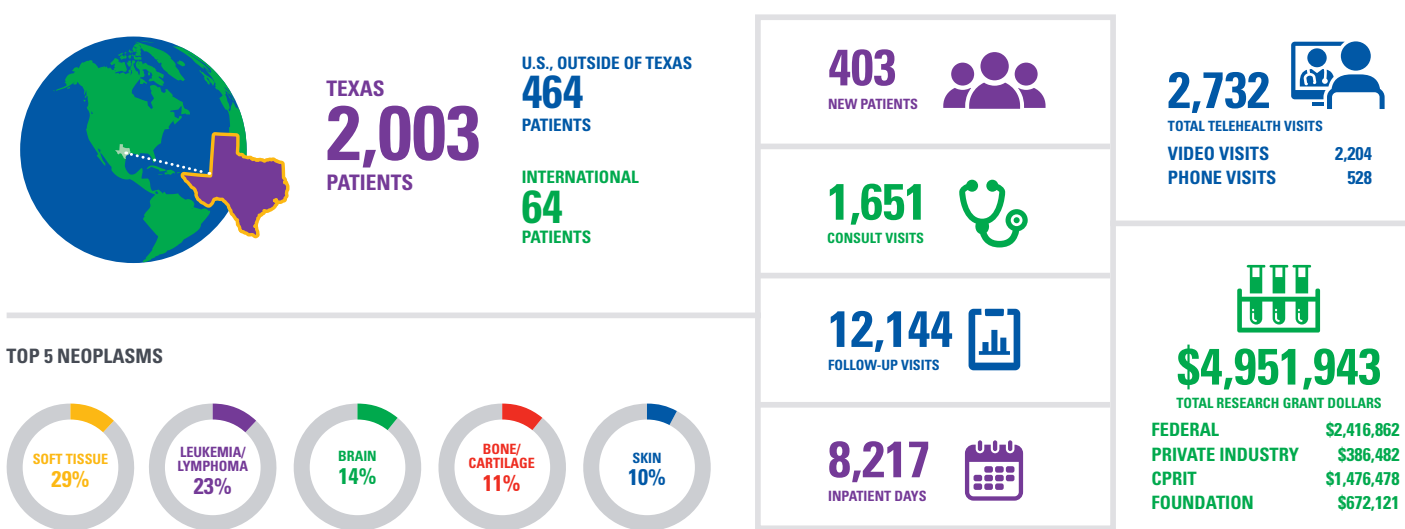
Sincerely,

Richard Gorlick, M.D.
 Division Head

Aaron Walton, M.P.A., C.R.A.
 Division Administrator

Pediatrics by the numbers

MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital offers patients a personalized setting that caters to the unique needs of children, adolescents and young adults — while still providing the resources of a major, comprehensive cancer center. Here's a breakdown of some stats from FY23.





Pediatric Ambulatory Treatment Center adds beds

MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital expanded its outpatient services capacity. In January 2023, the Pediatric Ambulatory Treatment Center (PATC) added 12 beds on a second floor, bringing the total to 19 beds. This expansion helps accommodate a growing number of outpatients who require chemotherapy and other infusions. In FY23, PATC employees provided care in 5,789 outpatient visits, an increase from the previous year.

The number of FY23 outpatients included an increase in adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients, ranging in age from 18-40. Pediatric nursing leaders worked with institutional clinics to contact young adult patients and offer them additional scheduling options. Satisfaction surveys indicated that many of these patients prefer the PATC because it is smaller and allows them to be seen more quickly. Some AYA outpatients are offered services such as psychosocial counseling, same-age support groups, college scholarship opportunities and access to fertility preservation support. These services are not widely known outside of Pediatrics.

Notably, the new pod was named “The Islands” following a vote among Pediatrics faculty and staff. That moniker fits in nicely with pre-existing Oceans, Mountains, Rainforest and Meadows pods. The Islands was previously an adult unit that will undergo renovations to suit younger patients. The other pods were designed with input from patients, families and donors.

Tri Delta alumnae group holds event to support pediatric cancer research

Relative to other types of cancer, securing funding for pediatric cancer research can be challenging, however, Houston Tri Delta Philanthropies, Inc. is helping to close that gap. The organization made a \$300,000 gift in June 2023 to support the work of Branko Cuglievan, M.D., and David McCall, M.D., both assistant professors of Pediatrics at MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital.

The Tri Delta group is part of a national sorority alumnae network that embraces the mission to cure childhood cancer as central to its philanthropic activity. MD Anderson is fortunate to be a regular beneficiary of the Houston chapter’s generosity. The group’s annual fundraiser, the SALE Houston, has generated nearly \$2 million for pediatric cancer research since its inception in 2015.

Coming up on its 10th anniversary, the SALE Houston is a two-day shopping event that features more than 50 of Houston’s premier fashion boutiques — all in one location at discounted prices. Through donations and sponsorships, the Tri Delta Houston chapter is able to generate proceeds that directly support pediatric cancer research.

“The SALE is a fun opportunity to add some signature pieces to your wardrobe while supporting a worthy cause,” says Connie Wright, who pledged Tri Delta while studying at The University of Texas at Austin and now volunteers at the event.

Cuglievan and McCall are leveraging their expertise in pediatric blood cancers, like forms of leukemia, to lead clinical trials on behalf of the Children’s Oncology Group. With support from the National Cancer Institute, the research team is exploring menin inhibitors, an oral medication, as an effective treatment option for patients who failed to fully benefit from standard chemotherapies — all while minimizing burdensome side effects. Menin inhibitors selectively target characteristics within blood cancers related to aberrations in KMT2A and NPM1 genes.

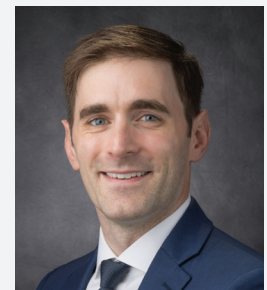
“You tell me about a novel cancer therapy, and I will tell you how philanthropy made its development possible,” says Cuglievan. “We are grateful to Tri Delta Houston for believing in the potential of our research and supporting MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital.”

The next event will be held at the Bayou City Event Center, with preview shopping on the evening of Thursday, January 11, 2024, and shopping opportunities on January 12-13. To purchase tickets and support pediatric cancer research, visit TheSaleHouston.com.

“I’m proud to be one of many volunteers and participants who work hard to make this possible,” says Wright. “If we can help just one child, then it’s all worth it.”



Branko Cuglievan, M.D.



David McCall, M.D.



These are just a few accomplishments led by our faculty. To meet our entire team, use your smartphone camera and the QR code.





Cancer survivor helps ensure fertility equality for all patients

After an appointment to remove polyps from her uterus, Kate Weber quickly inferred something was seriously wrong. She was only 25 years old.

“The doctor’s office called and told me to come back in right away — and to bring someone with me for support. Immediately, your stomach drops.”

Kate was diagnosed with embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma. Her local doctor recommended she seek care at MD Anderson. That’s when Andrew Livingston, M.D., associate professor of Pediatrics, stepped in to guide Kate through her treatment plan. As an expert in sarcoma and co-leader of MD Anderson’s Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Program, Livingston was in the unique position to understand the many challenges Kate was facing—like having a family one day.

When patients undergo cancer treatments like chemotherapy and radiation, side effects can include unintended damage of healthy tissue and disruption of the body’s natural processes. Unfortunately, fertility is sometimes affected in this way.

“I was young and single with no thoughts of having children soon,” Kate recalls. “But I was glad to know that my care team had my best interests at heart. I was lucky to have family and friends who helped support the cost of the egg collection and storage.”

Kate, who is now a high school agriculture teacher, realized that not all patients have the option to have fertility preservation. Insurance rarely covers the cost of related procedures. So she decided to found Kate’s Cause, a non-profit organization that raises money so other MD Anderson patients can have the same fertility options she had. In addition to hosting special events like their annual Egg-Stravaganza, the organization works closely with MD Anderson’s AYA Program and even travels to political venues to lobby for wider insurance coverage of these services.

Today, Kate is healthy and engaged to be married in 2024.

“My fiancé and I have talked about starting a family. We know that will look a little different for us, but we are so thankful to have options. And everyone deserves the same.”

Education



Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program Director Priti Tewari, M.D. (center), celebrates with graduating fellows: Jeremy Connors, M.D., Emily Rav, D.O., Sanila (Dinah) Sarkar, M.D., and Irtiza Sheikh, D.O.



Laura Rodriguez, pediatric school coordinator, and her daughter demonstrate how augmented reality app works.



Lacy Cook, pediatric school coordinator (left), worked with Rice University doctoral students Marissa Perez (second to left) and Viraj Ghosh and their assistant professor, Julea Vlassakis, Ph.D., to create a purple medallion featuring the hospital’s logo.

Hematology/oncology fellowship graduates excited to begin dream careers

Irtiza Sheikh, D.O. (right), was among six physicians who graduated from pediatric hematology/oncology fellowship programs in May. In June, he received a \$50,000 Young Investigator Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology Conquer Cancer Foundation to explore approaches to reduce the impact of CAR T cell exhaustion in diffuse large B-cell lymphoma. He and co-graduate Jeremy Connors, M.D. (left), were appointed as assistant professors in July. Emily Rav, D.O. (second to left), will continue at MD Anderson to pursue training in our Pediatrics Hospice and Palliative Medicine Program. Other graduates accepted roles outside the institution.

Hyundai drives support to engage our youngest learners

MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital won a \$100,000 Hyundai Impact Award that will aid teachers in our Education and Creative Arts Program create developmentally appropriate experiences for preschool patients — helping them refine their literacy, math, as well as fine motor and social skills. An augmented reality app for iPads engages users with video stories and pulls in visual scenery from wherever they are to make their real-life environment part of the story. Another read-aloud app lets users attach a small projector to their phone to display book scenes on a wall. Award dollars will help us to integrate these tools into our curriculum.

Rice University bioengineering students help teachers create higher-tech lesson plans

Doctoral students from Rice University’s Bioengineering Department volunteered to help MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital educators develop curriculum and tutoring support around science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects for secondary students. The collaborators are creating lesson plans which include challenging 3D printing assignments, writing code for games and apps, and generating project-based labs. Teachers and patients are practicing now by using a 3D printer to make medallions and other small items that require them to interact with a computer-aided design program and use plastic filament as printing material.

Prom Party Palooza: New memories with long-time friends

Prom Party Palooza returned to MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital after a three-year hiatus, bringing teen cancer patients and their guests together for an exciting night of dancing "Under the Sea."

In keeping with Prom Party Palooza tradition, a Dress and Suit Shop hosted on the hospital floor let prom-goers say, "Yes to the Dress" and create custom jewelry at the Kendra Scott Color Bar. The Sunshine Kids Foundation, a long-standing supporter of MD Anderson, provided new and stylish dresses, donated gift cards to purchase shoes and accessories, and they ensured that dashing suits were made available — courtesy of Men's Wearhouse. Local boutiques and volunteers hosted a glamour session, providing hair, makeup, nail, and other beauty services.

Prom-goers were cheered by faculty and staff as they entered the red-carpeted event. The affair included themed decor, photo booths, hors d'oeuvres, fun mocktails and a dessert table featuring a towering cake shaped like Ursula from the Little Mermaid movie. The glamorous evening was a success thanks to the generosity of many friends, including Sunshine Kids Foundation, Kendra Scott, Jill Vidal-Raines of EB Events, Inc., and a passionate team of MD Anderson employees and volunteers.



Sounding great thanks to Faris Foundation

This spring, the Faris Foundation Mobile Recording Studio made its debut at MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital. The "studio" is a mobile cart loaded with recording technology: microphone, noise-canceling headphones, MIDI keyboard, deejay equipment and more. This resource is an extension of the Arts in Medicine Program and was generously provided by the Faris Foundation.

Melissa Melo, the Faris Foundation Music Therapist, meets with patients and families to produce and record studio-quality music or sound effects to make their days brighter. She can position the cart right next to inpatient beds, allowing patients to help control the technology and feel like the driving creative force.



Transforming lives through summer camps

Each passing summer, MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital spreads hope through an array of safe, fun-filled camps — bringing joy to patients and families. A poignant testament to the impact of these camps came from grateful mother Audrey Pursch via social media: "She'd been counting down the days to camp since Christmas," underscoring her daughter's exhilaration at the prospect of returning.



The hospital coordinates weeklong camps tailored to patients and siblings, complemented by an enriching day camp designed for entire families. Camp Star Trails, hosted in Burton, Texas, caters to children ages 6-14 with horseback riding, swimming, sports, fishing and more. Camp H-Town, held at the Four Seasons Hotel Houston, offers this same age group a luxurious experience, plus trips to local entertainment venues. This year the campers attended the Houston Zoo and had a chance to go sailing. For teenagers, Camp AOK in Magnolia, Texas, is an ideal setting for fostering friendships, engaging in team building and enjoying traditional camp activities. To close out the summer, MD Anderson hosted a Camp Family Fun Day at Victory Camp in Alvin, Texas.



It's time to Rodeo!

Students from our Pediatric Education and Creative Arts program visited the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo on March 9, 2023. Thanks to rodeo volunteer Lezli Schilling Goss, the students enjoyed special access to many activities: pig races, mutton bustin' and the Lil' Rustlers Rodeo experience.

During the field trip, students were able to see their own creations displayed in the Hayloft Gallery as part of the rodeo's School Art Program — which

has a special category designed for young patients at local hospitals. We are proud to share that seven of our students received awards from the judges.

Soccer team honors patients, families and staff

Houston Dynamo FC and MD Anderson teamed up for another Kick Childhood Cancer Awareness game night, recognizing pediatric cancer survivors at the team's home match against rival Sporting Kansas City on September 10, 2022.

The night featured a Dream Team of 22 pediatric cancer survivors and their siblings who had a chance to sign honorary team contracts and walk onto the field with the starting players from both teams. MD Anderson patients, families and staff enjoyed the game from a private suite and were honored on the field during a special half-time recognition.



Generous holiday tradition helps us better serve patients

The Houston Racquet Club, a supporter of MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital for more than 30 years, recently presented a check of \$100,431 to help fund the Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Life Program. Club staff also delivered a collection of extravagant gingerbread buildings that were displayed in MD Anderson's Main Building for patients, visitors and employees to enjoy during the holidays. Bakers from River Oaks Country Club, Briar Club, Forest Club and San Jacinto College contributed to the confectionary masterpieces. In January, a few of our young patients got to don safety gear and smash the gingerbread village to pieces.



Please support pediatric research, patient programming and education efforts at MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital. Give online via the QR code.

To see the bright faces that make MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital such a special place, use your smartphone camera and the QR code to open the Impact Report prepared for our supporters.

