

## Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona Children's Hospital leads a new international project which aims to equal the survival rate of children suffering from leukaemia in Latin America and Europe

- Childhood leukaemia is especially prevalent in Latin American and Caribbean countries and the percentage of children who overcome the disease is significantly lower than that of children in Europe
- The main researchers of **CLOSER** project (**C**hildhood **L**eukaemia: **O**vercoming distance between **S**outh America and **E**uropean **R**egions) met in Sant Joan de Déu (SJD) Barcelona Children's Hospital the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> January to launch the project

Childhood leukaemia is particularly common in Latin American and Caribbean countries and the percentage of children who survive the disease is significantly lower than that of patients in Europe. Depending on the type of leukaemia and the country, survival rate of childhood leukaemia is around 50–80% in Latin America and the Caribbean regions, in sharp contrast to 80–95% rates in Europe. This significant difference may be due to several factors beyond the biology of the leukaemia, which may include a limited access to healthcare, the lack of diagnostic resources and a lack of research.

The European Commission has funded this project, led by Dr. Mireia Camós of SJD Barcelona Children's Hospital. CLOSER team will work to study and make recommendations to **improve the diagnosis and prognosis for children with leukaemia in Latin America**, thus **narrowing the survival gap** between the two regions. CLOSER project was selected out of a total of 48 applications from research sites and hospitals across Europe, and is the only paediatric funded project in this specific call.

Over the next five years, European experts from Austria, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Spain will work alongside researchers from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in a **large epidemiological study that will provide a better understanding of the different subtypes of leukaemia diagnosed in Latin America**. This information is important in order to apply risk-directed treatments to each individual patient, thus improving their prognosis and minimising undesirable side effects.

The project will also promote initiatives to **simplify current diagnostic procedures** and make them affordable, so they can be easily applied in those countries with fewer resources. CLOSER project also includes a **training programme to help healthcare professionals develop the required skills** in the best available diagnostic technologies. In addition, CLOSER project will directly engage patients in research ('patient empowerment') to get to know their real needs: not only those related to health, but also those relating to the educational and psychosocial requirements of the patients, their families and caregivers.

The research team will include professionals from different hospitals, laboratories, universities, research sites and patient foundations, and will also include policy makers, companies and civil society representatives. CLOSER project is approaching childhood leukaemia care in a global and innovative manner, not only focusing on the scientific aspects, but also on economic, cultural, social, educational and environmental factors in Latin America and Europe, with the end goal of improving the survival rate and quality of life of children suffering from leukaemia and their caregivers.

**List of researchers:**

SJD Barcelona Children's Hospital  
Fundació Sant Joan de Déu, Barcelona  
Fundació Institut de Recerca Contra la Leucèmia Josep Carreras, Barcelona  
Hospital de Pediatría SAMIC Prof. Dr Juan P. Garrahan, Buenos Aires  
St. Anna Kinderkrebsforschung, Vienna  
Hospital de Niños Roberto del Río, Santiago de Chile  
Univerzita Karlova, Prague  
Fundación Pérez Scremini, Montevideo  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle  
Asserta Global Healthcare Solutions, Barcelona  
Pulseras Candela, Barcelona  
Fundación Natali Dafne Flexer, Buenos Aires  
Fundación María Cecilia de Ayuda al Niño Oncológico, Buenos Aires  
Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome



Funded by the Horizon 2020  
Framework Programme of the  
European Union

*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825749.*

**For more information:**

Albert Moltó/Lourdes Campuzano  
[amolto@hsjdbcn.org](mailto:amolto@hsjdbcn.org)  
[lcampuzano@hsjdbcn.org](mailto:lcampuzano@hsjdbcn.org)  
Marketing and Communications Department  
SJD Barcelona Children's Hospital  
Tel.: +34 93 253 21 50 / +34 605 69 52 77