

Access to Clinical Trials for Adolescents & Young Adults (AYA) with Cancer

Aug 2017

Cancer is the leading cause of disease-related death for young people in Australia between the age of 15 and 25 with clinical outcomes for this group inferior to those seen in paediatric and adult patients who share the same diagnoses¹. Whilst research involving children and adults with common malignancies has resulted in improved survival for both of these age groups, AYA have not yet directly benefitted from this research due to their low rate of access and recruitment onto clinical trials^{1,2}. Currently in Australia, arbitrary age restrictions on clinical trials continue to render a number of young people ineligible for access to promising treatments, thereby contributing to poorer outcomes for AYA patients³.

The Victorian and Tasmanian Youth Cancer Advisory Board's mission is to improve the ongoing quality of life of young people affected by cancer and their families. We believe that increasing access to clinical trials for young people with cancer is essential to the improvement of outcomes for this age group. As such, our position about access to clinical trials is as follows.

As a Board and collective voice of young people affected by cancer, we believe:

1. It is unacceptable to prevent young people from accessing clinical trials based on the arbitrary issue of age alone.
2. By reducing current age restrictions for clinical trials from 18 to 16, many treatment options will become available for young people affected by cancer.
3. Young people with cancer should not have to face the additional distress and existential anxiety of being denied access to potentially life-saving treatment as a consequence of age.
4. Current regulations pose an unnecessary barrier contributing to reduced survival rates for young people and hindering research in the AYA oncology field.
5. Greater access to clinical trials for young people with cancer will assist in the development of more effective treatments for AYA patients and will enhance scientific understanding of AYA cancer biology.
6. Paying attention to this issue will ultimately result in greater survival for future AYA patients with cancer.

¹ AIHW (2011). Cancer in adolescents and young adults in Australia. Cancer series no. 62. Cat. no. CAN 59. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 26 July 2014 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737420603>.

² Ferrari, A., Montello, M., Budd, T. (2008). The challenges of clinical trials for adolescents and young adults with cancer. *May*; 50(5 Suppl):1101-4.

³ Fern LA, Whelan JS. Recruitment of adolescents and young adults to cancer clinical trials-international comparisons, barriers, and implications. *In Seminars in oncology* 2010;37(2):e1-e8.