

H30 Pediatric Brain Cancer

July 2007

Intro: Brain cancer is one of the most common cancers in children, second only to leukemia. But unlike leukemia, the genes that cause pediatric brain cancer continue to be somewhat of a mystery to researchers. They don't know why some tumors just don't respond to treatment. Doctors at Mayo Clinic are working hard to find the genes responsible for tumor growth. In hopes of one day finding an easier cure for patients like the 15-year-old you're about to meet.

Video

Total running time 1:45

**Cynthia Wetmore, M.D., Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic**

Audio

“WHAT WE'RE LOOKING AT IS SOME BRAIN TISSUE.”

DR. CYNTHIA WETMORE IS GIVING 15-YEAR-OLD ZACH DEMERS A TOUR OF THE LAB WHERE HER TEAM IS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HOW AND WHY BRAIN TUMORS FORM.

“IT'S ACTUALLY SHOWING AN AREA WHERE THE TUMOR IS DEVELOPING IN THE BACK OF THE BRAIN IN THE CEREBELLUM. THIS IS WHERE YOUR TUMOR DEVELOPED.”

ZACH DEVELOPED WHAT'S CALLED

A GERM CELL TUMOR. A CANCER HE IS DESPERATELY TRYING TO FIGHT.

Zach Demers

“FOUR ROUNDS OF CHEMO, BRAIN SURGERY AND RADIATION. “ HE BATTLED IT ONCE. BUT THE CANCER CAME BACK.

Zach Demers

“WE WERE HOPING AND PRAYING THAT IT WOULDN'T COME BACK. BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE. IT WAS HARD TO ACCEPT IT. SOMEHOW YOU GET THROUGH IT.”

**Shelly Demers
Zach's mom**

“IT'S A NIGHTMARE. AND YOU HOPE THAT YOU WAKE UP FROM THIS NIGHTMARE AND WE WILL WHEN HIS DOCTOR SAYS HE'S CANCER FREE.”

**Cynthia Wetmore, M.D., Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic**

“WE'RE VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT WE CAN GET A CURE.” BUT DR. WETMORE SAYS IT WON'T BE EASY. ZACH'S FACING HIGH DOSE CHEMOTHERAPY THAT WILL MAKE HIM VERY SICK. BUT SHE'S

Standup
Vivien Williams
Reporting

HOPING THE RESEARCH DONE IN THIS LAB WILL HELP CHANGE THAT FOR KIDS IN THE FUTURE. HER TEAM IS STUDYING HOW NORMAL GENES BECOME ACTIVATED AND CAUSE CELLS TO GROW UNCONTROLLABLY INTO CANCEROUS TUMORS. SUCH UNDERSTANDING MAY LEAD TO TARGETED THERAPIES THAT ATTACK ONLY THE CANCER WITHOUT HARMING NORMAL CELLS. SO CHILDREN LIKE ZACH CAN LIVE AND LOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE.

Zach Demers
Has Brain Cancer

“I WANT TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL. THEN GO ON TO COLLEGE AND MAYBE POSSIBLY BECOME PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGIST. BEING IN THE LAB TODAY WAS JUST SO AMAZING. YOU KNOW, THAT'D BE ONE OF MY DREAMS. TO WORK THERE.”

FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I'M VIVIEN
WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Zach has started chemo since the taping of this story. It's wiping him out, but the good news is that his tumor is shrinking.

For more information on pediatric brain cancer, visit our Website at...[STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]