

# Children with leukaemia: No more missing out on studies

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CHAKRAVORTY | DC  
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Fourteen-year-old Prithvi Raj is not worried any more, now that he knows he can write his exams confidently even after missing out on school because of leukaemia treatment. "I like it here and the teachers are teaching me all the subjects that I will be missing," says Prithvi over a game of chess with 13-year-old Niranjan who is also getting treatment for leukaemia.

Leukaemia in children, which requires minimum five months of treatment depending on the stage of the cancer, forces children undergoing treatments to discontinue their education. The Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology wants to ensure that doesn't happen. The govern-

ment-run hospital has set up a dedicated ward to teach its children admitted here. It will also issue certificates stating that the patient has completed the course of study at Kidwai and should be allowed to sit for the examination.

The 60-bed Kapoor Ward in the paediatric block of Kidwai Hospital looks more like a play school and less like a hospital ward that treats and takes care of children with leukaemia.

"The children have to undergo chemotherapy once every two days and since many come from neighbouring states or distant parts of the city, they waste time travelling. So we have a facility for them to stay here at the paediatric block," says Dr Vijay Kumar, director of the hospital. And because they have to stay back for the treatment

which can sometimes take nine months - the children miss out on school. Hence the in-house learning facility.

The three-year-old daughter of Manjula from Chikkaballapur is being treated for cancer for the past 50 days. "Apart from the treatment, she is also studying here. Teachers come to teach her here. This place has become a family," says Manjula.

The institute runs this unique initiative with the help of NGOs and charitable trusts such as the Curable Cancer in Kids Trust (CCKT), Shiva Shakti Trust and the Rotary Club.

"The NGOs have facilitated us with the teachers and also helped us immensely in this initiative," says L Appaji, professor and head of paediatric oncology, who oversees this initiative.



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