

Kids' cancer rates still climbing

May 18, 2011 by Kristin Schafer



Last week a friend posted a slideshow of her niece on facebook. The girl's father had written a song to accompany the photos of his daughter's battle with leukemia. It made me cry.

The fact that a 5-year-old girl should have to summon such courage takes me quickly from tears to anger. Children should not be battling cancer, yet more and more are forced to do exactly that. A report released last week confirmed that [childhood cancer rates](#) are higher than ever before, and continue to climb.

We know that [cancer-causing chemicals](#) play a part in this frightening upward trend. Isn't it time to do something about it?

Bringing a message to the White House

This is the urgent message a group of public health experts and advocates, including PAN Co-Director Kathryn Gilje, [carried to the White House today](#). The group met with the leader of President Obama's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to deliver signatures of more than 70,000 people who think it's high time for a national cancer prevention plan.

If you signed this petition, thank you. Kathryn is now on her way home, and will report back soon on the details and outcome of the meeting.

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Today's CEQ meeting marks the one-year anniversary of the groundbreaking President's Cancer Panel report that found strong links between environmental pollutants — e.g. pesticides and other chemicals — and cancer. Our previous meetings with White House officials urging their [leadership on cancer prevention](#) laid the groundwork for today's conversation.

Getting pushy about prevention

As we've [reported here before](#), the Cancer Panel highlighted a gross underestimation of environmental contributions to cancer that has formed the basis for public policymaking for years. The Panel called on the President to take action to "remove carcinogens and other toxins from our food, water and air." Other cancer scientists have added their voices to the [call for prevention](#) in recent months.

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The official [annual report on cancer incidence](#) released last week gives yet more urgency to the need to get moving on cancer prevention. Childhood cancer rates (mostly brain cancers and lymphoma-leukemia) continue to rise dramatically, though thankfully, more children are now surviving the ordeal.

But really, kids shouldn't have to be that brave.

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