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SickKids doctor given \$600K grant for brain tumour research

BY ANDREW PALAMARCHUK
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Dr. Annie Huang is a pediatric neuro-oncologist at the Hospital for Sick Children.

By Hospital for Sick Children photo

Tal "Tali" Doron passed away at age four in August 2007 following a battle with ATRT, a rare and highly malignant brain tumour. The following year, her family established Tali's Fund to support research for better treatments for children with rare brain cancers like ATRT.

Last year, the Vaughan charity partnered with six other organizations to create a research grant called Defeating Embryonal Cancer in Young People Together (DECRYPT) with the aim of significantly improving the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of childhood embryonal brain tumours, which are the most common malignant brain cancers in children. On Dec. 12, DECRYPT announced that its inaugural grant of \$600,000 is being awarded to Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) neuro-oncologist and ATRT expert Dr. Annie Huang for a four-year research project titled “A C17babybrains DECRYPT Feasibility Trial for Children <6 Years Old with High-Risk Embryonal Brain Tumours.”

Most children currently diagnosed with brain cancer either don't survive the disease or experience permanent impairments. The hope is the grant will change that reality.

“This has been our dream to truly leverage the collective strength of world-leading Canadian-led innovative science and clinical medicine in pediatric brain tumours to achieve the same survival and quality of survival for brain tumour patients as has been achieved for children with leukemia,” Huang said in a statement.

Tali's mother, Kim Doron, said Tali's Fund has been helping to support the research of Huang and her team at SickKids since 2008.

"We are so grateful for the promising outcomes of their work to date, as well as for the recognition of the potential impact of their continued research funded by the DECRYPT grant," she said in an email. "We are honoured to be part of this unique collaborative effort, and we are filled with hope that this project will pave the way for further strides toward offering safer and more effective treatment options for children with rare brain cancers, options that simply didn't exist when Tali was diagnosed.”

The other charities that are funding DECRYPT are: Kindred Foundation, Cancer Research Society, Phoebe Rose Rocks Foundation, Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada, The Miracle Marnie Foundation and Childhood Cancer Canada.

“This unique partnership with seven organizations represents an extraordinary alliance, symbolizing our determination to outsmart cancer,” Dajan O'Donnell, Cancer Research Society's scientific affairs and partnerships director, said in a news release. "By joining our forces, we are capable of achieving significant breakthroughs. Together, we pave the way toward a more promising future for children affected by rare embryonal brain tumours.”

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Andrew Palamarchuk is a reporter with toronto.com. He has been covering the crime beat since 2002 and has a passion for giving a voice to those affected by tragedy and looking at societal issues that may have contributed to it.