

RAY OF HOPE



Together, We fight Cancer Every Day

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Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej Message

Cancer is now a major public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa, with the disease among the three leading causes of premature death.

While childhood cancer is one of the most difficult journeys, not only for young patients but also for their families and communities, with early detection and timely treatment, there is a good chance of recovery and the possibility of a long and healthier future as majority of Paediatric cancer are treatable.

Therefore, I made sure that providing scholarships of cancer care for African healthcare providers is a main part of our strategy. Not only this, but also to focus on Paediatric Oncology training as much as we can.

Hence, we are working closely with African First Ladies to increase the limited number of Oncologists and improve access to quality and equitable cancer care in their countries.

Our storybook, “**Ray of Hope**” highlights this objective via sharing the journey of a young girl named **Hope**, who faces cancer with courage, resilience, and, above all, hope. The story also raises awareness about the importance of having access to a well-trained cancer care team to recognize early warning signs which you will know about when you read this storybook. These signs should never be ignored, as early detection saves lives.

It is important to note that nearly two-thirds of cancer cases can be treated if diagnosed early, and as many as one-third can be prevented by reducing risk factors such as exposure to radiation, certain infections, lifestyle-related causes, and more. Raising awareness about both prevention and early detection is essential in the fight against cancer.

Together with African First Ladies, we are proud to be making history in Africa by training the first Oncologists and building the first cancer care teams in several nations, ensuring that patients receive the care they deserve.

This storybook is part of our efforts to spread knowledge, inspire resilience, and remind families and communities that with awareness, compassion, and action, hope can always shine through.

Together, we fight Cancer every day.

Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej

CEO of Merck Foundation

President of "More Than a Mother" Campaign

IT'S A BRIGHT SUNNY DAY AND CHEERFUL HAPPY-GOING HOPE IS ON HER WAY TO SCHOOL WITH HER FRIEND GRACE...

Hey Grace, double up. We need to get to school before the bell rings.

Here we go again. Always excited about school, Ha ha ha.

BUT FOR SOME STRANGE REASONS, TODAY COMES WITH A DIFFERENT FEELING FOR HOPE...

Yes, Grace. Suddenly I feel weak and tired.

What is it Hope? You seem to be slowing down.





Tired? But we have barely walked for long and done nothing active to make us tired.

That's the strange thing I don't get. I had my breakfast, so I don't understand why I should feel weak too.

I recall you had the same feeling yesterday on our way back from school. It may be a sign there is something wrong with you.

You may be right. I will go back and tell my parents right away. I don't think I can make it to school today.

That's ok Hope. Your health is more important.

HOPE'S MUM GOT A BIT CONCERNED. WITHOUT DELAY, SHE VISITED THE LOCAL DISTRICT HOSPITAL FOR A QUICK TREATMENT

LOCAL DISTRICT
HOSPITAL



AFTER EXAMINING HER, I BELIEVE WE ARE LOOKING AT A TYPICAL CASE OF ANEMIA.

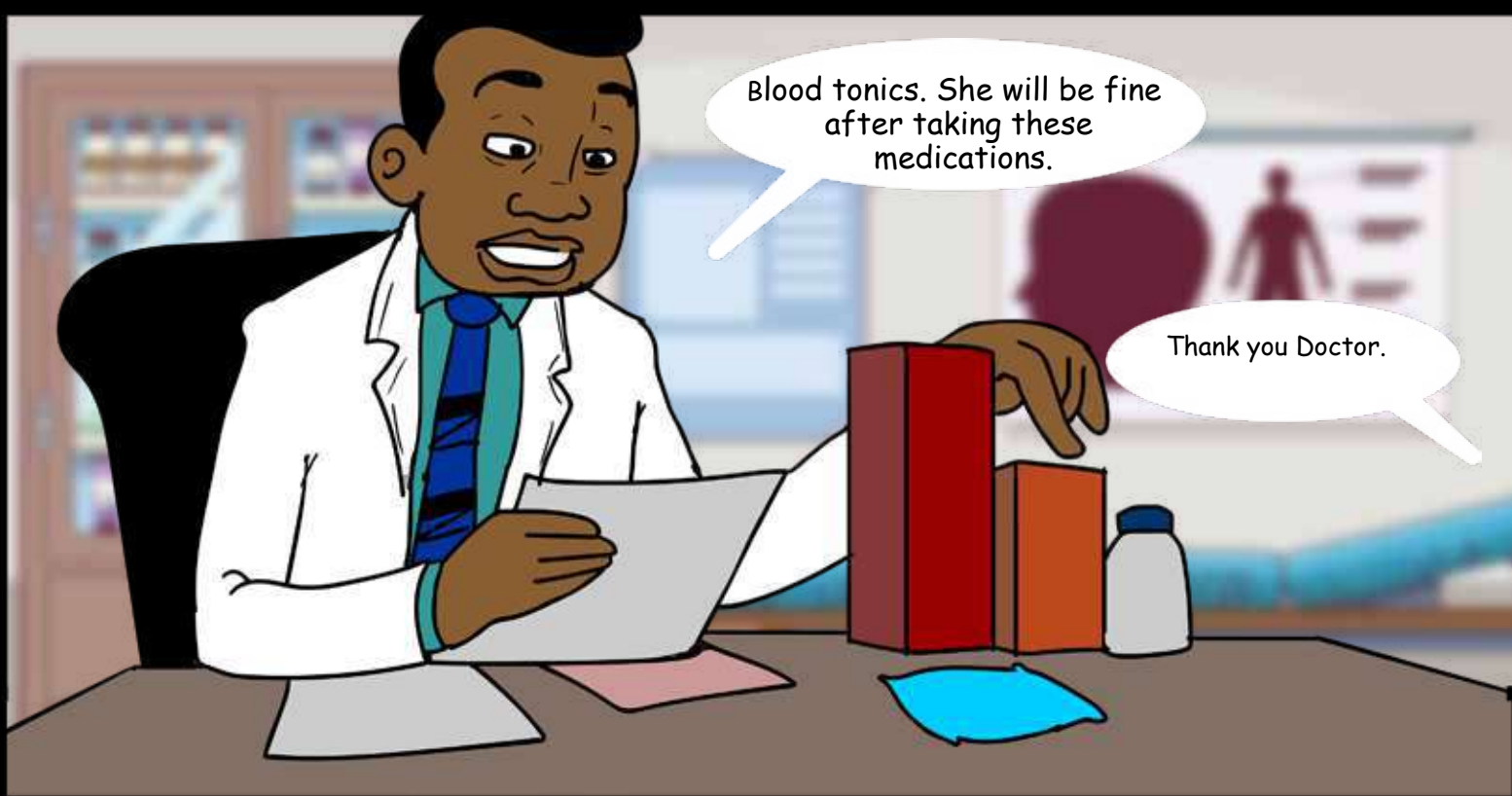
Anemia makes
you weak and
tired?



Yes., it's a sign you have
low blood levels in your body.
The symptoms are what
she experienced.

Hmm. How is it
treated?





UNFORTUNATELY, THE TONICS DIDN'T SEEM TO MAKE
MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE FOR HOPE

This quite strange.
You are still feeling
tired after taking
the medication.

I don't know.
Lets wait and see
what happens after
we take the last dose
of the prescribed
medication.

Yes mum. I still feel
weak and tired. What
could it be?

Your dad and I will decide
what to do after.

DESPITE THE MEDICATION, HOPE CONTINUED
TO FEEL SICK WITH LOSS OF APPETITE

ALONG WITH SOME
GUM BLEEDINGS...



AND SOME SEVERE FORM OF TIREDNESS
AND FATIGUE.

SHE SUFFERED INFECTIONS AND HER BODY
BRUISED EASILY...



Is that a bruise
from the
playground?





HOPE'S CONDITION CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE.
THE FEVERISHNESS, BLEEDING GUMS AND WEAKNESS
CONTINUED...



I feel cold and feverish.
Oh dear.



I can't take this
anymore. I think we need
to take her to another
health facility for a
second opinion. What
do you think?

I totally agree.
something more
than the Anemia
must be happening
to our daughter.

TRUELY, DOCTOR ADOBEA, THE CHILD SPECIALIST DOCTOR CONSULTED BY HOPE'S PARENTS SAW MORE THAN AN ANEMIC CONDITION IN HER...

I would really recommend you quickly take her to the Teaching hospital for immediate attention.



There is more happening to her than low blood level. A few test running will clarify the exact issue.

Thank you very much Doctor Adobea. We will do that right away.



AT THE TEACHING HOSPITAL, HOPE'S parents MET A PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGIST DOCTOR, WHO TRAINED THROUGH A SCHORLASHIP PROVIDED BY MERCK FOUNDATION...

Thank you for
bringing her here
immediately.

We have been
worried Dr. Martin.



TEACHING
HOSPITAL



DOCTOR MARTIN QUICKLY IDENTIFIED THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN HOPE'S CONDITION.

SWELLINGS IN THE NECK
AND ABDOMEN.

WEIGHT LOSS

RED RASHES ON
THE SKIN.





I suspect something terribly wrong. But don't worry Hope. Everything is going to be just fine.



I am going to run a few tests on you just to be sure of exactly what is troubling you, then, we shall see how best to tackle it.

Yes, Doctor Martin. Thanks.

AFTER THE LAB TESTS WERE CONDUCTED, DOCTOR MARTIN FINALLY HAD THE RESULTS...

Hi Doctor Martin,
finally. I hope
It is not as bad
as we think?

Well? It is not
too good, from
what I suspected
earlier...

It turns out from the
lab results, that
we are dealing with...



ACUTE WHAT???

Oh dear.

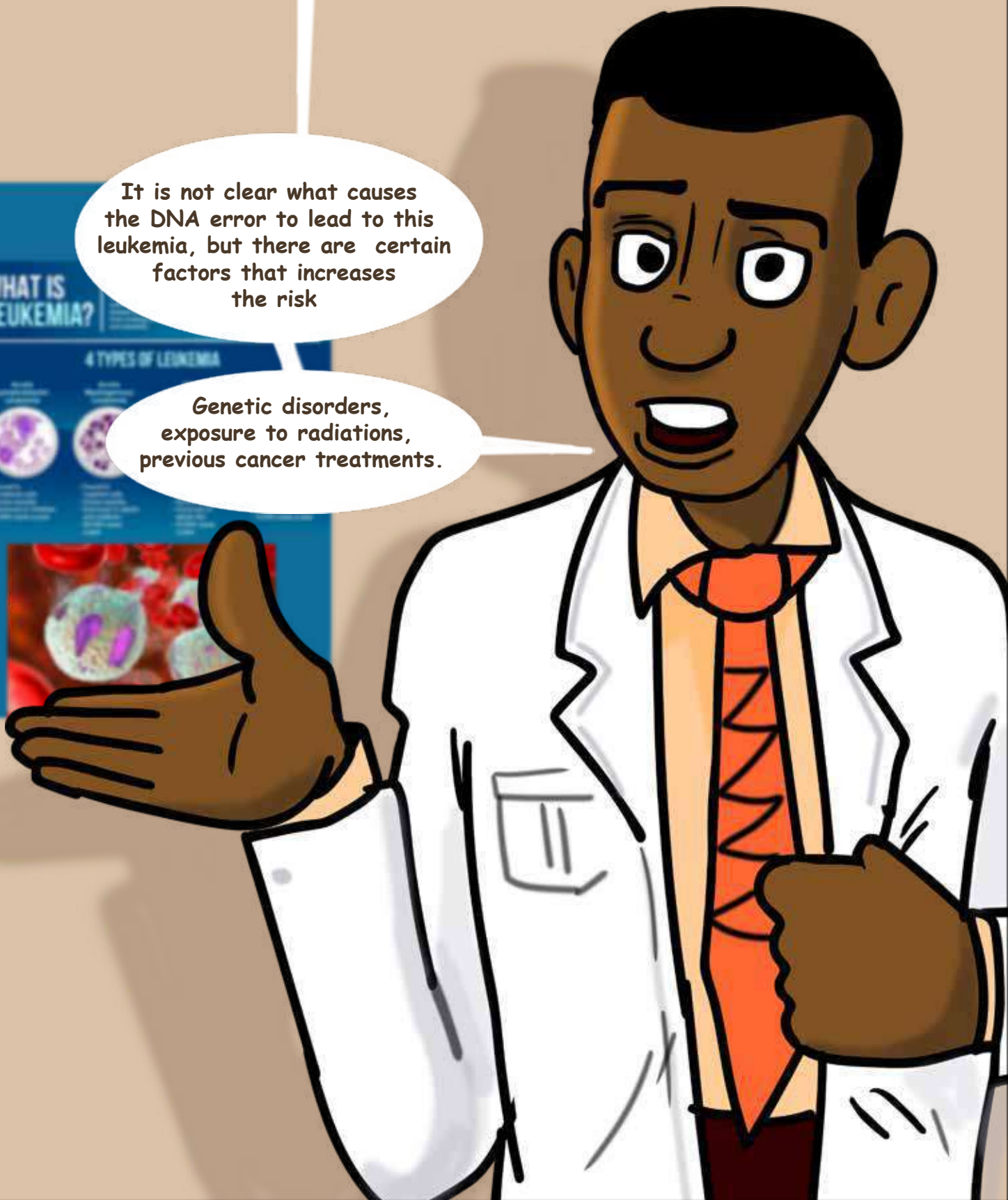
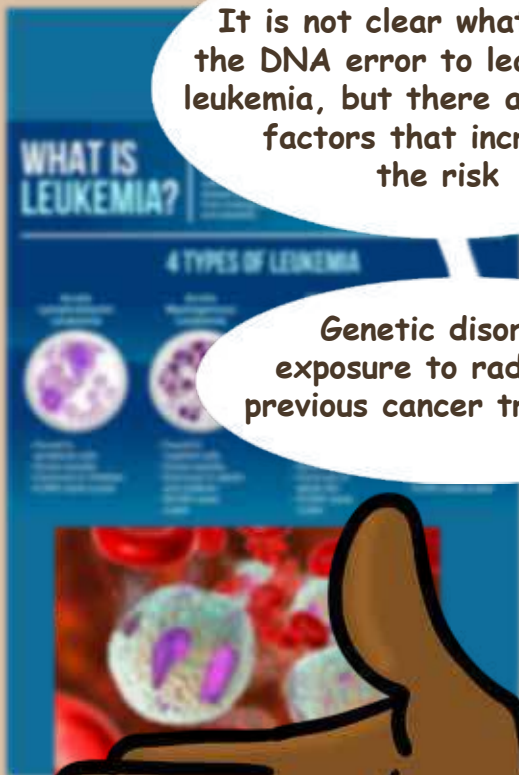
ACUTE LYMPHOBLASTIC LEUKEMIA!

ACUTE LYMPHOBLASTIC LEUKEMIA!

It's a form of childhood cancer of the blood and bone marrow that affects the white blood cells in the body.

It is not clear what causes the DNA error to lead to this leukemia, but there are certain factors that increases the risk

Genetic disorders, exposure to radiations, previous cancer treatments.





Cancer? Doctor Martin,
this is really a big blow
to us. What do we do?
Is there hope for our
daughter?

I can understand. But
there is hope for Hope. Luckily,
early diagnosis and treatment
in children results in a good
chance for a possible
recovery.

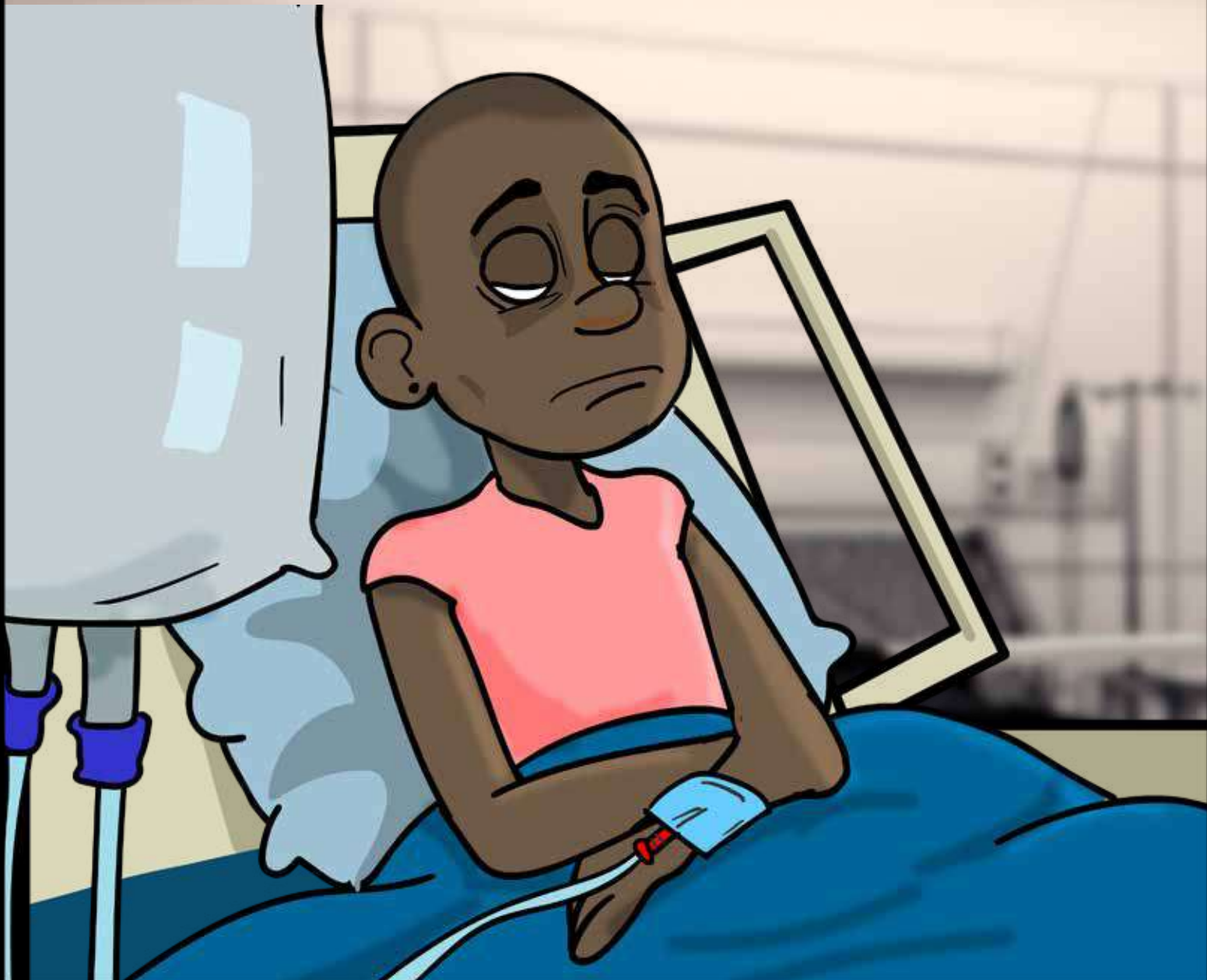
We need to keep our
hope alive, to keep
Hope alive.

What's the next line
of action?

Cancer treatment, which will include radiotherapy sessions. At least, for the next four weeks we need to be vigorous to arrest the situation.



WITH A HEAVY HEART, HOPE'S PARENTS HAD TO EMBARK ON A JOURNEY TO FIGHT FOR THEIR DAUGHTER'S LIFE.



FORTUNATELY, ASIDE HER PARENTS, HOPE
HAD THE SUPPORT OF HER NEIGHBOURS
AND FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL...

SPEEDY RECOVERY
HOPE



Have you noticed
her skin has
become paler?

Yes. She also has
lost her hair from the
treatment. I really pray
for speedy recovery
for her.

SPEEDY RECOVERY
HOPE



FOUR WEEKS INTO THE RADIOTHERAPY, HOPE'S SKIN COLOR RETURNED. HER ENERGY INCREASED...

It's good to see the cheerful Hope break through the struggle. We are so glad to see you active again.

Does that mean I am well?

You are definitely on the road to recovery. We still have a lot to do to ensure the cancer doesn't return.



ADDITIONAL THREE MONTHS OF RIGOROUS TREATMENT
HOPE'S CONDITION GETS MUCH BETTER. HER POSITIVE ATTITUDE
AND WILL MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS.

Yayyy! I'm definitely sharing
this good news with other
patients. With early detection
and a positive mindset,
recovery is possible!

I like her
spirit.

Yes. That gives
us all hope.



HOPE'S STORY BECAME AN INSPIRATION FOR MANY OTHERS IN AND OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. THEY BECAME AWARE OF THE THREAT OF CANCER IN CHILDHOOD AND HOW TO QUICKLY DETECT IT FOR EARLY TREATMENT.

Wow. What an inspiring story. With determination, challenges can be **OVERCOME**, just like Hope's.

Now I know that cancer can also affect children and the signs for its early detection.



EARLY DETECTION SIGNALS

Just like Hope's case, early detection of cancer can save lives. Here are some warning signals to take note of. Even though other diseases may mimic these symptoms, they are highly suggestive of cancer.



Persistent pain or discomfort in the abdomen



Obvious change in size or texture of a wart or a mole



Unexplained fever



Unexplained tiredness and weight loss of 10% or more within 3-6 months.



Change in bowel or bladder habits consistently for 2-3 months.



Nagging cough or hoarseness of voice for more than 2 weeks or smoker's cough that becomes intense.



A sore doesn't heal, changed color, ulcerates or bleeds



Indigestion and difficulty in swallowing



Thickening or lump in the breast or elsewhere that has progressively enlarged with or without associated pain



Unusual bleeding or discharge from any opening example: coughing blood, blood in the urine, stool, frequent or heavy menstruation



New research shows that as many as one-third of all cancer cases are due to preventable causes.



Be physically active.



Limit your alcohol intake



Avoid Smoking



Have a healthy diet

Eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables and fruits.

Limit high-calorie foods.

Avoid processed meat; limit red meat and foods high in salts



Get immunized. Cancer prevention from certain viral infections.

Talk to your doctor about immunization against Hepatitis and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)



Protect yourself from the sun. Skin cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer and one of the most preventable.



Maintain a healthy body weight.



Get regular medical care. Regular self exams and screenings for various types of cancers such as: skin, colon, prostate, cervix and breast cancer especially for people with family history and high risk individual can increase your chances of discovering cancer early, when treatment is most likely to be successful.



Read and follow health and safety instructions



Don't share needles



Practice safe Sex

Avoid risky behavior that can lead to infection (HIV, HPV, Hepatitis B-C) that in turn, might increase the risk of cancer

**TOGETHER WE CAN
FIGHT CANCER
EVERYDAY!**





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