

## ZERO CHILDHOOD CANCER PROGRAM

### SAVING 1000 SICK KIDS A YEAR IN AUSTRALIA



Australia will be the first country in the world to offer the Zero Childhood Cancer Program to every person under 18 who is diagnosed with cancer (stock image)

### **Australia Plan to Save at Least 1000 Sick Kids a Year as Nation Becomes First in the World to Offer It to Everyone**

- Zero Childhood Cancer Program offered to Aussie kids
- Treatment analyses genetic sequencing of cancer
- Allows scientists to find drug to treat specific mutation
- Stefanovic said news of the treatment gave him 'tingles'

Karl Stefanovic was visibly moved while discussing a ground breaking new cancer treatment that hopes to cure or at least prolong the lives of every child in Australia with the disease.

Australia will be the first country in the world to offer the Zero Childhood Cancer Program to every person under 18 who is diagnosed with cancer.

About 1,000 children every year in Australia will be diagnosed with the disease, while three a week will sadly lose their lives.

The treatment works by analysing the genetic sequencing of a child's cancer. Scientists are then able to search a database of 120 drugs to find which would best target the specific gene mutation.

The Today Show host said the news of such a potentially life-saving treatment was giving him 'tingles' as he spoke to specialist paediatric oncologist Dr Geoff McCowage.

'This is such a wonderful thing to give those kids out there and their families some peace of mind in the most awful of circumstances,' he said.



**Karl Stefanovic was visibly moved while discussing a groundbreaking new cancer treatment that hopes to cure or prolong the lives of every child in Australia with the disease**  
Photo by: © Nine

The treatment had previously just been limited to children suffering the worst forms of cancer, but by the end of the year everyone under 18 with the disease will be eligible - regardless of their age and type of cancer.

The work is being led by the Children's Cancer Institute and Kids Cancer Centre at Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick, Australia. Zero will be rolled out across all nine of Australia's children's hospitals by the end of the year.

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

**The Zero Childhood Cancer Program works by analysing the genetic sequence of a child's cancer. The cancer cells will be then screened across 120 drugs so researchers can find which drug will best treat the cancer.**

**Those drugs are then tested in a lab before being given to the patient.**

### **Response to Zero**

In a clinical trial of 250 children, 70 per cent showed a complete or partial response to Zero, or had their disease stabilised.

'The old-fashioned way (of treatment) was to take a sample of a cancer and look at it under a microscope and say "OK this is bone cancer", and then use some drugs from the 1980s that were pretty blunt instruments and caused all sorts of side effects and hope they worked,' Dr McCowage said on the breakfast program.

Zero will allow scientists to analyse the genes in the tumour, and identify the change in the DNA that caused the cancer.

'Then we can have a sense of why did that cell become malignant but more importantly, we can find DNA changes that now have a very modern, very specific drug to treat them.'

The oncologist said the modern treatment would target the cancer but not the rest of the body, with patients unlikely to lose their hair or suffer a drop in their blood count.

'We can legitimately expect that this is going to save lives in the future, this will become mainstream,' he said.

### **Transforming everything**

'It's just going to transform everything we do.'

Vanessa Tyrrell, a Program Leader at Zero Childhood Cancer said incredible results have already been seen from trials.

'We are seeing children alive today, who would not have survived without Zero Childhood Cancer,' she said.

The clinical trial opened in September, 2017, with more than 900 children having already been enrolled. -**[dailymail.co.uk](https://www.dailymail.co.uk)**, February 14, 2023