

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

The International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) wishes to express its solidarity with and support for the efforts of the International Pediatric Oncology Society (SIOP) Abandonment of Treatment Committee to help bring an end to the unethical practices of hospital detention of children with cancer in Kenyan public hospitals. As described in recent articles in *Psycho-Oncology*, *Pediatric Blood and Cancer* and *the Archives of Disease in Childhood* and confirmed by reports from a variety of professionals who work or have worked in these settings, it is common practice for the Kenyan public hospitals to forcibly prevent discharge of children with cancer at the completion of their treatment when the family is unable to fully pay the hospital bill. This often necessitates unwanted separation of parent and child at a time when the child's quality of life demands return of the child to their family and home environment. In addition, the Kenyan public hospitals have also refused to release to the parents for burial the bodies of children who have died of their cancer in the public hospitals of Kenya if the hospital bill is not fully paid at the time of the child's death. While we support the rights of the Kenyan hospitals to seek reimbursement for care and we know there is an underutilized program in Kenyan hospitals for waiver of hospital costs for low-income families, we find these detention practices violate ethical practice and deny basic human rights to children with cancer and their families.

In addition, these practices contribute to treatment abandonment, decreased survival and under-reporting of cases of childhood cancer. The fear of losing contact with one's child detained in hospital discourages families from bringing their ill children to the hospital early enough to benefit from cancer treatment or returning the child to the hospital when additional treatment is needed. Children who could be helped to survive do not receive adequate or appropriately-timed treatment. Thus, this practice is a barrier to care and reduces the efficiency of cancer treatments available in Kenya, diminishing the benefit of contributions from international organizations to medical care in Kenya. Hospital detention drastically reduces the quality of life of children with cancer and their family members. It adds greatly to the distress of children and parents and retards the growth of effective medical care for children with cancer in Kenya.

IPOS joins SIOP in rallying other international agencies and organizations to encourage the Kenyan government to modernize its laws and practices by ending the unethical and inhumane hospital detention of children with cancer to exact payment from parents for hospital costs.