

## 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Summit on **Cancer Therapy**

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### **The Development and Growth of a cancer centre parent advisory group**

**Mary McGowan**

The Royal Children's hospital, Australia

20 children under the age of 18 are diagnosed with childhood cancer annually in Victoria. The diagnosis of cancer in a child is devastating with far-reaching psychosocial, emotional and financial implications for not just the child but also the family system as a whole. Due to an increased survival rate of 82% more and more is being learned about the long term impact of this disease. Some of these former families have the need to meet current families experiencing similar experiences and/or want to give something back to patients, families and treatment centres. The No 2 standard of the Australian Health Services Accreditation Standards is "Consumers Engagement" In 2002 the Children's Cancer Centre Parent Advisory Group (PAG) was established. Parents and staff from the unit form the membership of this group and work together to improve the overall outcomes for our families. However, it should be borne in mind prior to starting a PAG, that the necessary infrastructure should exist within the organisation in order to support the successful management of a volunteer programme. There are several key elements to address when developing a PAG what motivates people to volunteer; identifying and recruiting volunteers, screening, selection and training and most importantly, retention and recognition. The management and empowerment of volunteers through providing regular support, supervision and on-going evaluation is essential to protect both the beneficiary and the volunteer. This presentation will go through the development, the growth and achievements as well as the pit falls of PAG.

#### **Biography**

Mary McGowan is a Community Liaison Manager in the Children's Cancer Centre at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne.

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