

The Role of Teens in their Health Care Decisions

By Amy Bentley



Dr. Leonard Sender
CHOC Cancer Specialist

Dr. Sender is the medical director at the Hyundai Cancer Institute at CHOC Children's and director of clinical operations and program development at the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center at UC Irvine Medical Center. He also oversees CHOC's Adolescent and Young Adult Program. Dr. Sender completed his internship and residency in pediatrics at UC Irvine Medical Center and had a fellowship in pediatric hematology/oncology at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Dr. Sender serves as board chairman of the "Stupid Cancer" Foundation and is a founding member and chairman of SeventyK.org, an adolescent cancer advocacy organization.

Dr. Sender's philosophy of care: "I take a patient-centric approach and treat young patients as people while understanding the context in which they get cancer. My goals are to cure the cancer and achieve a meaningful survivorship."

EDUCATION:

Medical school at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa

BOARD CERTIFICATIONS:

Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Pediatrics

135,957

NUMBER OF CLINIC VISITS AT CHOC IN 2013 (TO PRIMARY CARE AND SPECIALTY CLINICS)

GETTING YOUR TEEN'S COOPERATION

"Treat your teen like an adult and really explain the disease to them and what it means to them," says Dr. Sender, CHOC's director of the Adolescent and Young Adult program. Include your teen in discussions about his case with the doctors and health care providers, he adds. "We don't want to dictate to them what happens. We want to educate them so they know what they need to know to make a decision. Be 100 percent honest and don't hide the truth. I believe in total transparency. Get them engaged in what we are doing. Get them to own it. It's their body."



WHAT CAN TEENS DO?

Many teens are able to manage much of their own health care, from giving themselves injections to taking medications, says Dr. Sender. They can speak to their physician on their own and research their condition online or visit CHOC's Hope Resource Room and explore the many educational resources available so they feel knowledgeable and empowered.

CONTINUE ROUTINES AND KEEP THINGS "NORMAL"

It's important for parents of adolescent patients with serious or chronic illnesses to keep up a normal routine at home as much as possible, says Dr. Sender. He offered some tips for parents and families:

- Don't let the teen's illness or disease "own their lives" and change their normal relationships with their families and peers.
- Understand the teen's emerging autonomy and don't "micro-manage" the teen.
- Encourage the teen to go to school (if possible) and keep up his or her relationships with classmates, teachers and peers. These relationships are important to teens who can feel isolated when hospitalized.



3,280

NUMBER OF INPATIENT SURGERIES PERFORMED AT CHOC IN ORANGE IN 2013

65,908

TOTAL PATIENT DAYS AT BOTH CHOC IN ORANGE AND CHOC AT MISSION, 2013



50
YEARS
OF EXPERT CARE

For over 50 years, CHOC Children's physicians, nurses and staff have been devoted to improving the lives of children and families in our community. As home to the region's only dedicated pediatric emergency department and other world-class services and programs, from cardiology and neurosurgery to neonatology and orthopedics, CHOC is committed to being the leading destination for children's health by providing exceptional and innovative care.

For information on the expert care we provide and the health plans we accept, visit choc.org



Experts In: **Teen Health** Learn more at choc.org/health.