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## THE CURE FOR CHILDHOOD BRAIN CANCER STARTS NOW

### ***-Pioneering Australian scientist tackles incurable cancer in a world-first-***

After tragically losing his nine-year-old daughter, Amy, to a brain tumour, Ren Pedersen has helped raise \$100,000 for Children's Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA), which will go towards critical brain cancer research being carried out by Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick paediatric oncologist and CCIA scientist, Dr David Ziegler.

The Cure Starts Now (CSN) is a Townsville based, international organisation dedicated to raising vital funds for brain cancer research. The Australian branch of CSN was created by Ren Pedersen to raise money specifically for Australian research, after his family lost their precious Amy in 2009.

"Amy fought to the very end," says Ren. "Her resilience and bravery gave her the strength to soldier on for 16 months – most patients don't last that long. Amy lost her battle, but we're still battling to beat this devastating cancer. A movement benefitting all of humanity is at last taking shape!"

In August 2011 CSN (Australia) generously donated \$100,000 to CCIA, which will go towards the research program Dr Ziegler is undertaking for one of the most aggressive forms of childhood cancer, a brain tumour called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG).

"Currently there is no effective treatment, and sadly almost all young patients die within one year of being diagnosed with DIPG" says Dr Ziegler.

"With these funds we will be able to utilise the cutting-edge robotic technology in CCIA's Drug Discovery Centre to find new treatments. We plan to perform a robotic screen of up to 160,000 small chemical molecules to find an effective treatment for this deadly brain cancer.

"We are working with the first ever cultured cells from DPG patients, which came from overseas," he says. "Next we plan to collect cells from Australian patients and store them in CCIA's Tumour Bank for ongoing research. These will be the first collection of DIPG in Australia."

CSN (Australia) is committed not only to fundraising activities, but also wants to raise public awareness within Australia about these deadly tumours and is turning medical heads both nationally and across the globe.

"Successful awareness leads to successful fundraising," says Ren. "By educating Australians about the severity of paediatric brain tumours, we can better communicate why it's so important corporate Australia supports this cause and we appeal to all Aussies to get behind us so we can

find a universal cure for ALL cancer through our endeavours, both adult and paediatric. There is no more deserving cause on the face of this earth”

Dr David Ziegler is a paediatric oncologist at the Sydney Children’s Hospital, Randwick and a scientist at CCIA.

### **Background**

#### **The Cure Starts Now (CSN)**

The Cure Starts Now is an international charity dedicated to supporting research into paediatric brain tumours. The Cure Starts Now (Australia) is Townsville based, fully independent Australian arm of the charity. Its principal purpose is to provide funds for research into a cure for Brainstem Glioma (particularly DIPG), to provide education to professionals and the public concerning such cancers and to assist families impacted by paediatric brain tumours. CSN (Australia) is run and based in Townsville and was founded in 2009 by Ren Pedersen who tragically lost his daughter at the age of nine to a brain tumour. CSN (Australia) also has sub-branches in New South Wales and Tasmania, with further expansions planned for the near future.

#### **Dr David Ziegler**

Dr Ziegler is a paediatric oncologist (cancer specialist) at Sydney Children’s Hospital and conducts research at Children’s Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA). He is the head of the clinical trials unit within the Cancer Centre at the hospital and is in the process of establishing an early phase clinical trials program to test new therapies in children with incurable disease. His strategy is to develop the capacity to rapidly translate positive laboratory findings into clinical trials via the hospital’s early phase clinical trials Unit. This will facilitate the creation of new treatments for children who have no other effective treatment options available. Following his research at Harvard Medical School, Dr Ziegler joined CCIA’s research team and was awarded the 2010 Balnaves Foundation grant and a Cure Cancer Australia award.

#### **Children’s Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA)**

Children’s Cancer Institute Australia for Medical Research (CCIA) is the only independent medical research institute in Australia devoted to research into the causes, better treatments, prevention and cure of childhood cancer. Our vision is to save the lives of all children with cancer and eliminate their suffering. Founded in 1976 by a dedicated group of parents and doctors who wanted to do something more in the fight against children’s cancer, CCIA opened its first laboratory in 1984. The Institute, located at the Lowy Cancer Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, now employs over 170 staff and students, including more than 120 scientists. Research at CCIA comprises a multifaceted approach to improving the outcome of childhood cancer sufferers. Our research programs focus on translational research aimed at defining and achieving improved treatment and survival rates for children with cancer. CCIA is affiliated with the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and Sydney Children’s Hospital (Randwick).

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Images and interviews are available upon request. Photos/filming can be arranged of Dr Ziegler and Ren Pedersen in CCIA Sydney labs, upon appointment.

