

Wednesday, 6 September 2023

David Poplack

Category 2: Civil society

Impact

Dr. David Poplack has had transformational impact in the field of pediatric oncology over the course of his career, from working at the National Cancer Center, to leading the Texas Children's Hospital's Cancer Center from 1993–2018, during which time he grew the team from 7 faculty members, 42 employees and 1 laboratory to nearly 200 faculty members, 1,100 employees and 46 laboratories. He is also the editor of *Principles and Practice of Pediatric Oncology*, the leading textbook in field of pediatric oncology, which is in its eighth edition. Most recently, upon learning that while 85% of children with cancer in the US survive, 90% of children with cancer in SSA will die, Dr. Poplack stepped down from his role as Director to launch a comprehensive capacity building program to improve pediatric cancer care in SSA.

Since launching in 2016, Global HOPE has grown to sites in seven African countries, trained more than 6,500 healthcare workers, and reached over 17,000 children. Global HOPE is building on the successful training program Dr. Poplack helped build at Texas Children's Hospital to train African doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers to be experts in the diagnosis and treatment of children with cancer in SSA. The program launched a first of its kind PHO Fellowship training program in Uganda in 2017, and to date has trained 26 PHO specialists who leading care in 12 centers across 9 countries. His leadership will have lasting impact on the continent of Africa, helping build the capacity and workforce to ensure that children living in SSA can achieve the same treatment outcomes as those in other resourced settings.

Equity

Dr. Poplack's leadership in developing Global HOPE is centered around addressing the horrific inequity that exists for survival of children with cancer in sub-Saharan Africa. In developing Global HOPE, Dr. Poplack and his team have partnered with Ministries of Health, academic medical institutions and government healthcare facilities to improve care for children with cancer in SSA, and have already seen remarkable results in survival rates. When the Global HOPE program started in Uganda in 2016, 30% of children survived at 1 month after diagnosis, and today, nearly 60% are surviving at one year. This focus on education and training will dramatically improve survival rates for children with cancer in SSA.

Prior to his work with Global HOPE, Dr. Poplack responded to a critical unmet need for pediatric cancer care

and treatment in the medically-underserved Rio Grande Valley. Together in partnership with Texas Children's Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Vannie F. Cook Jr Cancer Foundation, Dr. Poplack lead the establishment of the first and only comprehensive pediatric cancer and hematology center in South Texas in 2001.

Global recognition

Dr. Poplack is recognized as a leader in the field of pediatric oncology, both in the US and globally. He has served on many national and international committees, including panel appointments at the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Institute of Medicine and a term as an appointed member of the National Cancer Institute's Board of Scientific Counselors. In 2016, Dr. Poplack was awarded the American Society of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Distinguished Career Award, as well as the Hyundai Hope on Wheels Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2018, Dr. Poplack was the inaugural Angel Award recipient, for lifetime achievement, from the Children's Brain Tumor Foundation. In 2019, Dr. Poplack received the Leonard M. Rosen Memorial Research Award from the Children's Cancer Cause in recognition and support of his life-saving work around the world. Also, in 2019, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation.

In 2023, Dr. Poplack received the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Excellence in Teaching Award, a reflection of his vision, drive, and his ability to engage teams of people in collaborative initiatives to move the field of pediatric hematology/oncology forward. Dr. Poplack has been an inspirational leader in his field from its earliest days, has mentored and inspired countless pediatric hematologist/oncologists who are now leaders in the field across the globe, and has positively impacted the lives of countless children around the world.