

THE Lydia Hess

FAMILY

"I've learned so much about leukemia since my 3-year-old daughter, Lydia, was diagnosed," shares Julie Hess, Lydia's mom. "It's incredible to think about how my vocabulary has evolved to include words like T-cells, B-cells, high dose methotrexate, echocardiogram, and bone marrow biopsy."

For parents of children fighting pediatric cancer, this newfound knowledge is a reality that no parent should have to face. "I feel like I have an honorary medical degree with everything I've learned," shares Julie. "And now I realize the importance of pediatric cancer research."

Thanks to funding through the Four Diamonds, the Four Diamonds Pediatric Cancer Research Center is focused on learning more about how cancer forms, how it can be treated, and how treatment options can be more effective while minimizing the long-term side effects of treatment.

"Treatment options have improved tremendously over the years, but people don't really know about the side effects of treatment," explains Julie. "In fact, shortly after diagnosis, Lydia was in the hospital for over two months because of a known, but rare, side effect when one of the chemo drugs attacked her pancreas." People know about hair loss, but secondary cancers, learning disabilities, physical and developmental delays, and infertility are often the long-term side effects to treatment.



At Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital, we're constantly pursuing a deeper knowledge into pediatric cancer care and treatment, and are committed to collaborating with pediatric cancer patient families in this effort.

The Four Diamonds Pediatric Cancer Research Center is a member of several consortiums – network hospitals collaborating on research – which share research and collaborate on projects. "Just the other week a sample of Lydia's bone marrow from her diagnosis six months ago was sent to a network hospital in the Midwest for testing," shares Julie. "It makes me happy to know that Lydia's experience could benefit other kids through research."

"I've never felt this passionate about a cause, but research really is the key. Sure, it's my daughter, but if our situation can make a difference in other people's lives, then we want to help. Four Diamonds does that."