

"A well-informed patient is a great help"

Oncologist Hernán Cortés, who has received an award from the Eco Foundation, treats Aysha King

ALEJANDRA RODRÍGUEZ

The name of Hernán Cortés Funes, the head of medical oncology at the 12 de Octubre hospital in Madrid and the oncology unit at the HC hospital in Marbella, has recently been linked with that of Aysha King, the British boy whose parents were arrested and remanded in custody at the Soto del Real hospital in Madrid after an international arrest warrant was issued by the UK because they removed Aysha from a hospital in Southampton without permission from his doctors.

Aysha had undergone surgery for a medulloblastoma, a type of brain tumor. Following the operation, he was scheduled to undergo very aggressive radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment to eliminate residual cancer cells, but his parents were against this. In the search for a treatment they thought would be better, the family stopped off in Spain on their way to Prague, the only city in Europe where a costly proton beam treatment is available; this is a very powerful and selective form of therapy which targets a particular area without affecting surrounding tissue.

Aysha is now free from cancer but he continues to be given check-ups under the supervision of Dr. Cortés Funes in Marbella.

However, this is not why this oncologist, who is originally from Argentina, was given an award by the ECO (Excelencia y Calidad en Oncología) Foundation a few days ago. During its VI symposium on tumoral illness, this institution wanted to pay tribute to the clinical and scientific career of this specialist who, paradoxically, always dreamed of being a surgeon.

"When I was 21, I realised that it would be a very long time until I was qualified to carry out operations," he recalls. So he studied internal medicine and became a specialist in oncology, basing his thesis on Hodgkin's Disease.

Most important unit

After his thesis, he went abroad for training, research and a great deal of hard work which eventually brought him to the 12 de Octubre hospital, which has now become one of the



Dr. Hernán Cortés, after receiving an award from the Eco Foundation

ELVIRA MEDÍAS

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most important oncology units in the country.

"When I started, oncology was in its infancy. It has now become specialised, thanks to an incredible evolution which has been helped by constant improvements in treatment, more effective therapies, less frequent, easier and less mutilating surgery and treatments which are continually becoming more sophisticated. These have meant that we can now talk about cancer in similar terms to those used in other chronic illnesses," he says, referring to biological medication and immunotherapy, a relatively simple form of treatment

which is developing in an unexpected and very encouraging way.

Information

"You always have to remember that in front of you there is a frightened patient who wants to get better. You have to consider their fears, their doubts, their circumstances...", explains this oncologist, who is also concerned about the influence of incorrect information on cancer patients.

"I always say my worst enemy is Dr. Google, who we can't report for practising medicine illegally. The Internet raises false hopes and also misinforms patients," he explains.

"A well-informed patient is a great help to a specialist, and I believe that was a key factor in Aysha's case. His parents had not been well informed and it all developed into a very unpleasant situation although, now, it looks as if there is a happy ending," he says.

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