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National Brain Tumor Society gift fosters development of new treatment

Of the more than 10,000 children who were estimated to be diagnosed with cancer in 2008, greater than 20 percent were found to have brain or spinal cord tumors.

Committed to changing the odds for these pediatric patients, the National Brain Tumor Society (NBTS) recently awarded Dana-Farber's Mark Kieran, MD, PhD, director of Pediatric Medical Neuro-Oncology at DFCL, more than \$295,000 for his research in low-grade gliomas (LGGs)—the most common brain tumors in children.

“Dr. Kieran's initiative for refractory low-grade gliomas in children reflects our commitment to advancing pediatric brain tumor research toward the development of effective therapies with minimal adverse effects,” said David Hurwitz, PhD, the Richard B. Ross chief scientific officer at the National Brain Tumor Society.

This award was made possible through the Low-Grade Glioma Initiative, a unique fundraising effort by families who connected through NBTS to find support following the devastating news of a brain tumor diagnosis for a child in their family.

Though some children with LGGs can be cured effectively with



National Brain Tumor Society

Leading through research and support

chemotherapy alone, others face recurrences of their cancer and need repeated treatment. To treat these patients better, Kieran and his colleagues have identified that a previously discovered pathway in a cell, called mTOR, is activated in certain forms of LGGs. Through a multi-institutional clinical trial, Kieran and his team are now testing a new oral mTOR inhibitor, RAD001, which has been shown to successfully inhibit the pathway and is also well-tolerated in patients.

“Less toxic, more targeted therapies are very much needed for children with this disease,” said Kieran. “This clinical trial would not be possible without support from the National Brain Tumor Society.” ■

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