SUPPORTING FAMILIES FROM DIAGNOSIS TO RECOVERY

CARLEY'S ANGELS

2020 PROGRESS REPORT

THANK YOU

For providing fulsome treatment and care for patients and their whole support team.

WHEN A PATIENT IS DIAGNOSED with cancer at cancer at SickKids, the whole family needs support. For two years, and with a gift of $150,000, Carley's Angels funded a Fellow in Psychosocial Oncology, Shawna Markowitz. Shawna is a social worker at the Garron Family Cancer Centre (GFCC) that helps patients and their families through their most difficult times, carrying Carley's legacy forward with compassion. Her work is split between 60% clinical time and research. Shawna's clinical role is focused on providing holistic cancer care and addressing the social and psychosocial needs of patients and their families. This includes mental health assessments, mindfulness implementation, coping mechanisms, and linking families with community resources when needed.

Shawna worked as part of a wider team—collaborating with departments across SickKids such as psychology, psychiatry, and Child Life services—to build a program which provides the best and most fulsome care possible to the whole family. Shawna was able to identify strengths in our existing psychosocial support, such as during initial treatment and care, moments of crisis, and at end-of-life, but also bolstered support during the middle of treatment when care is ongoing and chronic.

Without dedicated research time, it would have been difficult for Shawna to innovate and create change while focused on the day-to-day clinical work. This fellowship created opportunities for Shawna to spend more time with each patient, allowing her to make a substantial impact on their journey that will positively impact them for years after their cancer journey. The fellowship allowed Shawna to get a program up and running in one year, which would have otherwise taken at least five years without the protected time.

"WE GIVE THE TOOLS THAT FAMILIES NEED TO SHIFT FROM A PLACE OF IMMOBILIZING FEAR TO HOPE."

Shawna also took an active role in developing, organizing, and running educational sessions and workshops for parents and siblings of children receiving active treatment, on topics including, but not limited to, managing uncertainty and mindfulness strategies. She received wonderful feedback that these programs taught valuable coping mechanisms and brought relief and support to family members of patients, ultimately creating stronger support for the patient. With COVID-19 protocols now in place, she has made a quick pivot to adapt these workshops online ensuring programs like the 90-minute online sibling session will be running this year, providing coping strategies to siblings of patients from 6 through 18 years of age. Given the circumstances, these siblings are unable to be in hospital, creating further layers of isolation and trauma for the families and patients. "We give the tools that families need to shift from a place of immobilizing fear to hope," says Shawna. "Being a social worker is about encouraging patients and families to find the strength to cope with their cancer."

Now that her fellowship has concluded , Shawna is pleased to have laid the foundation to carry the program forward for years to come. The oncology fellowship role was so successful that she has transitioned to a permanent staff position as a social worker for the department. None of this incredible work would be possible without the support of Carley's Angels, which makes a real difference in the lives of patients and their families. From Shawna, and all of us at SickKids, thank you for your unwavering generosity.