



## Welcome

Sickle Cell News is a newsletter for children, adolescents and adults with sickle cell disease (SCD) and their families, produced by the Hematology team at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Stay tuned for more information about living with SCD, upcoming activities and special events.



**Saranya Veluswamy, MD**

clinician as well as Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. A native of India, Dr. Veluswamy completed her medical residency at Children's Hospital of Michigan, and it was there that she first treated patients with sickle cell disease.

## Staff Member Spotlight

The Hematology Division at Children's Hospital Los Angeles is pleased to welcome Saranya Veluswamy, MD, to the Cancer and Blood Disease Institute. Dr. Veluswamy is a

After spending three years practicing general pediatrics in Chicago, Dr. Veluswamy came to CHLA in 2015 to undertake a fellowship in hematology-oncology. She has been working closely with Thomas Coates, MD, Section Head of Hematology, on understanding mechanisms of pain and how pain is triggered in sickle cell patients. The goal of this research is to determine new approaches to reducing the burden of chronic pain in sickle cell patients, looking for treatments that are not based on opioid use.

Dr. Veluswamy's patients appreciate her caring approach and her patient listening. Away from work, she enjoys getting out in nature with her family (with appropriate physical distancing, of course). We are pleased to have Dr. Veluswamy on our staff.



## World Sickle Cell Day

Friday, June 19, 2020

June 19 has been officially designated as World Sickle Cell Awareness Day. This annual international event intends to increase knowledge and understanding of sickle cell disease, and the challenges experienced by patients and their families and caregivers. We will celebrate with treats for patients who are in clinic on June 18 and June 19. Hope to see you there!



## Coates' Corner

These are very difficult times for people throughout the world and particularly for individuals who have chronic diseases like sickle cell anemia. I'm sure that you are all concerned about the COVID-19 crisis. As best as we can determine, patients with sickle cell anemia are not at increased risk for becoming infected. However, patients are

likely at increased risk for complications if they become infected. Patients should follow all recommendations and maintain physical distancing, stay out of crowds, and stay at home as much as possible. Wear masks in public and practice frequent hand washing with soap.

Many of you are concerned about the availability of blood for transfusion. So are we. As a result, we are recommending that patients receiving routine transfusions start on hydroxyurea now to offer protection in case they are unable to get their usual transfusions because of decreased blood availability. This approach is being implemented nationwide at most major sickle cell centers. It is important to start now while still getting transfusions because it takes several weeks for the drug to start to work. Note that we are not recommending that the transfusions be stopped, but rather that hydroxyurea be added to your treatment plan in the event blood becomes less available.

Most hospitals—pediatric hospitals, in particular—have rigid screening procedures in place to make it as safe as possible for patients to come to the hospital for their transfusions. Here at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, we are working hard to make sure the Infusion Center is safe for incoming patients. All staff members are screened daily and surfaces are cleaned regularly.

Californians are doing a great job of staying at home and stopping the spread of the virus. We know this is a challenging time for our families. However, we need to remain vigilant and self-isolate at least for the immediate future until we are sure the danger has passed. Take care and stay safe.



## Book Your Virtual Visit

We are now offering telehealth clinic visits. If you have Wi-Fi and an audio-and video-enabled device (such as a smartphone, tablet or computer), you can request a telehealth visit. Call 323-361-3414.

## We miss you!

If you have not been to see us in a while, please call the sickle cell team at 323-361-3414 to schedule an appointment.

**Send your suggestions or comments about the newsletter to [tpeterson@chla.usc.edu](mailto:tpeterson@chla.usc.edu)**