



MEET DR. NAYF EDREES



When Dr. Nayf Edrees was in high school, he had a neighborhood friend who had acute myeloid leukemia (AML), which was diagnosed in a late stage. By the time it was discovered, she caught an infection which, unfortunately, she died as a result of. This is what inspired him to become a pediatric hematologist-oncologist. Dr. Edrees graduated medical school in 2008, started his residency in 2009, and started his fellowship in 2012. He began working as an attending physician in 2015 in West Palm Beach, FL.

Dr. Edrees feels the healthcare landscape has changed greatly since he started his career because pediatric oncology is a fast-paced field and every day there's a new medication or treatment. One big change, especially in pediatric leukemia, is that in the 1950s and 1960s, the cure rate was only 10 percent and now it is close to 90 percent. In the last ten years, he's seen more focus on target therapy. In just the last few years, Dr. Edrees has seen much more focus on immunotherapy, which he believes will become one of the main treatments in the near future, for cancer in general.

The main challenge of specializing in pediatric oncology for Dr. Edrees is that it's a demanding field with many psychological pressures. When you have an 80-year-old patient diagnosed with cancer versus a patient who is only three-years-old being diagnosed, it's a different experience. It's also challenging to deal with the patient's entire family who are feeling helpless, especially when

he doesn't always have all their answers to the questions. For example, a parent may wonder why their child has cancer when the patient or his parents haven't done anything harmful. Unfortunately, even doctors don't have answers to some of those questions.

On the other hand, Dr. Edrees reminds himself that the good outcomes and cure rates of pediatric cancer patients compared to adults is rewarding.

Another challenge Dr. Edrees deals with is the demand for electronic documentation and logistic paperwork that takes time away from the physician-patient interaction. This is part of the job he doesn't like. For example, to order a specific scan or test for a patient he sometimes ends up on the phone for hours with the patient's insurance company to get the right test authorized, and a lot of documentation comes along with that. He is concerned that this challenge will continue to be an issue in the future.

What Dr. Edrees finds most rewarding is the relationships he develops not only with his patients, but with their entire families. He gets to know the whole family well and always ends up talking with them about many things outside their treatment—from how their life is going to what struggles they are dealing with on a daily basis.

Dr. Edrees also enjoys that it's a hands-on job; he speaks to the patients, performs procedures, and administers



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chemo. He never feels bored because of the scope of interactions and the fact that he sees patients in a variety of settings from the clinic to the outpatient procedure center to the hospital.

The advice Dr. Edrees would give to someone considering a career in pediatric oncology is that you must be compassionate and sympathetic. He believes the key to being sympathetic to the patient and family is to always listen to them. Even before diagnosis, most of the families he treats have sensed something wasn't right, and it's crucial to them as they go through what they are about to go through to know their doctor is listening to them.

Dr. Edrees believes his patients prefer the human connection they get from speaking directly with him versus communicating through their electronic portal. While he has concerns about the privacy issues related to using electronic communications, he assumes it will become more prevalent in the future. He does believe, however, that online support groups are a great resource for patients to share what they are going through and find empathy for their situation.

Dr. Edrees feels that all new discoveries in medicine are based on or backed by research. That's why he feels rewarded by providing his clinical expertise in his field to help answer questions about needs, or how a treatment might benefit patients. By participating in research, he hopes to provide help to future generations. He feels it's because of research that the jump in that cure rate

from 10 percent to 90 percent has occurred. Dr. Edrees believes that the more the pharmaceutical stakeholders hear from the clinical stakeholders, the better the outcome as it helps them identify potential future problems or benefits.

Dr. Edrees also cares for patients with sickle cell anemia and has recently participated in a large sickle cell study. He believes the coming decade will be historic for sickle cell. There has been a lot more focus on it recently with several new medications becoming available for it in the last few months. He knows that progress has been made in large part because of research studies.

Dr. Edrees loves his specialty and doesn't see that he would ever switch from it. However, if he were to pursue a career outside of medicine, he would pursue the pharmaceutical side of research. He would still want to contribute to benefiting patient care, but it would be from the other side of the aisle.

In his free time, Dr. Edrees can be found playing soccer. He also loves the water and enjoys snorkeling and swimming.