Recent research on survivorship issues, funded by The Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland, has highlighted the need for caution when using the term "chemo brain" with haematology patients, as well as the need for further research to fully understand the concept.

A range of cognitive changes as a result of oncology treatments has become widely recognised although this study along with a range of literature published on the subject indicates that there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding the actual cause, types, severity and length of these cognitive changes. The study asserted that there seemed to be a great deal of uncertainty regarding the actual cause, types, severity and length of these cognitive changes and that there needed to be more research into the possibility of a range of causes including an association with surgery, ageing, over tiredness, anxiety, chemotherapy drugs like thalidomide and severity and length of treatment. The study concluded that there is much work to be done to clarify the many issues associated with haematology diagnoses and treatment.

In total there were 50 participants (26 male; 24 female) who represented the major haematological diagnosis and treatment. In total there were 50 participants (26 male; 24 female) who represented the major haematological diagnosis and treatment.

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The group of individuals who described symptoms associated with 'chemo brain' reported differences in whether the symptoms were limited to the period of treatment or persisted over time, and other participants stated that they did not have any problems with their cognitive function.

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URGENTLY NEEDED PATIENT AND FAMILY ACCOMMODATION TAKES SHAPE

The Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland’s two major building projects are on track to be patient and family friendly when they open in early 2015.

The projects include a new 30-unit ESA Village at Dutton Park in Brisbane and eight additional units at the Foundation’s Freemasons Village in Townsville.

The new facilities will provide much-needed accommodation for rural and regional patients and their families during cancer treatment.

According to Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland President, Beverley Mirolo, in 2010/2011, the Foundation provided more than 41,000 nights of accommodation with 15,000 of those total nights bought at private motels when the Foundation’s own villages were at capacity.

“For this reason we welcomed the State Government support through Queensland Health to expand and relocate ESA Village, as well as add eight apartments to our Townsville Village,” Mrs Mirolo said.

“However, even with that support the Foundation is currently working hard to raise an additional $2 million to complete both villages so that patients and families can begin to move in by July this year.”

The nature of blood cancers, particularly leukaemias, means that many patients require urgent medical treatment, often within 24 hours of diagnosis. For others, such as Maggie, the treatment plan means packing up their lives: leaving home, work, family and friends – and moving to treatment centres in Brisbane and Townsville for an average stay of five months, with many staying for 12 months or more.

Leukaemia is the most common form of childhood cancer. Over 200 children (0-14) are diagnosed each year in Australia. In the last 20 years, the survival rate for children with leukaemia has risen to 85%.

Leukaemia is a life-threatening illness for the patient and their family, and the costs can be overwhelming. The Leukaemia Foundation provides support and a nurturing environment.

“While we couldn’t have coped without the Foundation’s help, it is hard to describe what it means to be given that kind of support when you are facing your worst nightmare.”

In October 2009, we welcomed Maggie’s little sister Ruby, into our family. Maggie and Ruby’s play together is just wonderful.

Maggie was particular about starting kindergarten this year, and John and I feel very blessed indeed to be given that kind of support when you are facing your worst nightmare.

Join Julia – World’s Greatest Shave 15-17 March

Indoors or outdoors, in-car or in-class, the World’s Greatest Shave will be held from 15-17 March with the Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland aiming to raise $4 million to fund patient care and medical research.

Julia works at the Wesley Hospital and knows firsthand the support that cancer patients and their families require to get through a diagnosis and treatment, as well as the ongoing need to improve treatments and survival rates through medical research.

“I helped orchestrate a previous World’s Greatest Shave in Townsville and I wholeheartedly witnessed the difference it made to the patients who attended,” Julia said. “I saw the bravery of the ladies to shave their beautiful long locks and it has a personal target of $250,000 which she will well over half way towards achieving.

Julia’s shave event will be held at Metrhy B doctors Club in New Farm from midday on Saturday 17 March with a view to having the actual shave at around 4pm.

Could you leave a gift in your will?

Once you’ve remembered your loved ones, you can help the Leukaemia Foundation give hope to patients in the future by leaving a gift in your will.

Every gift large or small really takes shape.

To find out how to leave a special gift to the Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland contact Hedley Lee on free call 1800 500 088 or visit www.leukaemia.org.au.

Leukaemia is the most common form of childhood cancer. Over 200 children (0-14) are diagnosed each year in Australia. In the last 20 years, the survival rate for children with leukaemia has risen to 85%.

The oncologist told us Maggie had congenital nephrotic leukaemia, meaning she was born with it – a very rare condition.

At only two and half weeks old, Maggie went into her gruelling chemotherapy treatment.

Chemotherapy caused Maggie to vomit everywhere and we were told it was unlikely she would live. We hoped, longed and wished that she would get well enough to come home. We were able to take her home a week later, but she was put on a ventilator but she was too young for kidney dialysis.

Our precious girl’s liver started to shut down. She was taken to the Intensive Care Unit where the doctors came to tell us that Maggie had a 2% chance of survival. We couldn’t believe it.

At five months, doctors told us our tiny baby Maggie was very excited about the future is just wonderful. Watching our two girls play together is just wonderful.

John and I feel very blessed indeed to be given that kind of support when you are facing your worst nightmare.

You can make a donation to help complete these important community projects and give patients and their families a home away from home at www.homeawayfromhome.org or phone 3318 4455.

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