

Family Shares Story of Hope, Resilience

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Childhood cancer is one of the leading causes of death from disease among children in the U.S. According to the [American Cancer Society](#), nearly 10,000 children under the age of 15 are diagnosed with cancer each year. As September comes to an end, there is still time to recognize the thousands of families affected each year and to highlight the importance of research, treatment and support for young patients.



Emmie Rangel listens to Mohamad Al-Rahawan, M.D., during her consultation.

[Mohamad Al-Rahawan, M.D.](#), Texas Tech Physicians pediatric oncologist and executive director for the TTUHSC School of Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Care, explained that cancer does not discriminate between children and adults.

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Cancer is not a disease that affects individuals. It affects families and communities. Think about cancer as everyone's problem. We have to do this together.”

Mohamad Al-Rahawan, M.D.,

“Cancer is a disease that affects the elderly more than the younger population, yet it does not distinguish between the ages,” Al-Rahawan said. “Despite the fact that pediatric cancer is a smaller problem compared to adult cancer in terms of numbers, it is still a problem for pediatrics. In fact, some kids are born with cancer.”

Al-Rahawan emphasized that a cancer diagnosis impacts the entire family, often bringing unforeseen logistical and financial burdens, especially for families living in rural areas.

Former patient, [Emmie Rangel](#), was three years old when she was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma. She and her family traveled for hours to receive specialized care in Lubbock, Texas, and Dallas for months.

"It was a lot of driving," Iriana Rangel, Emmie's mom, said. "She was diagnosed on a Friday, and we started chemotherapy the next Monday. It was a challenge, but we had lots of calls and texts and support back home."

Home is a rural area just outside the city limits of Pecos, Texas.

"Children are not merely young, small adults," Al-Rahawan said. "They're children and that's to be considered because they will not always be able to understand what they're facing and what we need them to do. Oftentimes, we are obtaining consent to treat them by proxy, by asking the father, mother or guardian to allow us to do treatment. That's tricky because you want to include the child in the decision-making level that is appropriate to them."

Emmie was not used to being in a hospital setting and would throw crayons at anyone who came into her room. Among the hospital staff, she developed a reputation for being sassy, but she eventually warmed up to them months later.

"We're more appreciative of the time now that we're home," Sergio Rangel, Emmie's dad, said. "We're looking forward for Emmie to doing normal kid stuff and just having fun with her brother and not having to worry too much all the time about her health."

The Rangel's story is a powerful example of the courage and sacrifice required to fight childhood cancer.

"There is a need to screen for cancer, diagnose and treat earlier in order for us to do this effectively and have better outcomes," Al-Rahawan said. "Cancer is not a disease that affects individuals. It affects families and communities. Think about cancer as everyone's problem. We have to do this together."

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