

# ***Why is Little Star Foundation different ?***

**Our specialized long term care programs started 16 years ago**

**Recent study and excerpts from article on the importance of long term care for children with cancer.**

## **Survivors of Childhood Cancer Often Suicidal**



By LIZ SZABO, USA TODAY

Aug. 28, 2006 - A study finds that many survivors of pediatric cancer have attempted to take or have considered taking their own lives, even decades after their diagnoses.

Although about 80% of children with cancer now survive at least five years, the disease and its treatments leave many patients with lingering pain, brain damage or other serious disabilities. Those wounds make some survivors more vulnerable to suicidal thoughts, according to a study in the Aug. 20, 2006 issue of the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

In the study, which included 226 adult survivors of pediatric cancer at Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, nearly 13% had been suicidal in the past week or had attempted to kill themselves. On average, patients were about 28 years old. Patients were more likely to be suicidal if they felt hopeless or depressed, says psychologist Christopher Recklitis, director of research at Dana-Farber's Perini Family Survivors' Center and the paper's lead author. He notes that only 40% of suicidal patients had symptoms of depression, however.

Other suicidal patients were plagued by pain or physical problems, such as not being able to comfortably walk up stairs or carry groceries. Patients also were more likely to be suicidal if they were treated when very young, the study showed.

Patients who reported a problem with their appearance were five times more likely to be suicidal, Recklitis says. And patients were 4 times more likely to be suicidal if they had had radiation to the head. These treatments can cause learning delays and problems with walking and balance.