

# Focusing on You: Sylvester Celebrates AYA Cancer Awareness Week

Doctor discusses unique approach to treating adolescent and young adult cancers.

Warren Alperstein, M.D., a pediatric hematologist-oncologist at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, discusses the treatment of adolescent and young adult cancers (AYA), and how Sylvester offers a multidisciplinary approach to best treat this special population of patients. Candela Gonzalez Marengo is one of those patients.

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## Meet Candela:

Candela Gonzalez Marengo was just shy of 15 when she was diagnosed with AML or acute myeloid leukemia.

“I played sports. I was going to school. Yeah, I felt bad. I never thought it was going to be leukemia,” says Candela.

Her family traveled from Argentina to Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. That’s where she met Warren Alperstein, M.D., a pediatric hematologist-oncologist, who treats a special population of patients called AYA.

“This is AYA awareness week, and AYA is adolescent and young adults, which range

from age 15, all the way up to 39,” Dr. Alperstein explains. “Here at Sylvester, we have a great AYA program that is able to service this age group. You get access to the pediatric oncology side, as well as the adult oncology side.”

Sylvester’s multidisciplinary team of experts meets the unique needs of these patients.

“Cardiologists that look at post chemotherapy complications. We have endocrinologists that look at specifically if there's disorders there. It's a whole team wide approach,” says Dr. Alperstein.

Candela needed a bone marrow transplant.

“They walked me through everything that was going on,” Candela says.

“As an NCI-designated cancer center, how does that help Sylvester to best treat its patients?” asks anchor Pam Giganti.

“You're not just getting treated by what was standard of care five, 10 years ago, you're getting the most up to date technologies,” Dr. Alperstein says.

Now cancer free, Candela has a message for the team.

“Thank you so much for everything. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you,” says Candela.

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## **How is precision medicine used in cancer treatment?**

When a patient is diagnosed with cancer, it is essential to understand how long the tumor has existed, where it originated, and the genetic changes that caused abnormal growth. By understanding genetic changes and biomarkers, we have helped develop targeted therapies that are more effective because they respond to the molecular changes that drive tumor growth. Learn more.

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