Aetiology of Childhood Leukemia

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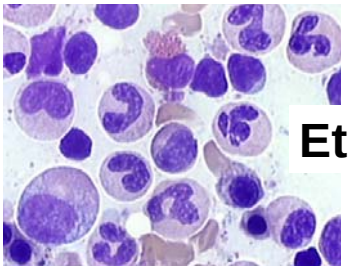
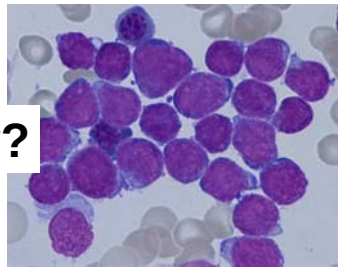
Leukemogenesis

Normal bone marrow



Acute leukemia



Etiology?

Stem cell

Molecular events

Disruption of process of differentiation, survival, self-renewal

- Natural History of the Disease
- Role of Genetic Factors
- Role of Environmental Factors

- Natural History of the Disease
- Role of Genetic Factors
- Role of Environmental Factors

Leukemia in Twins

Monozygotic twins have concordance rate of ~5%

Genetic predisposition?

Simultaneous exposure to a common leukemogenic event?

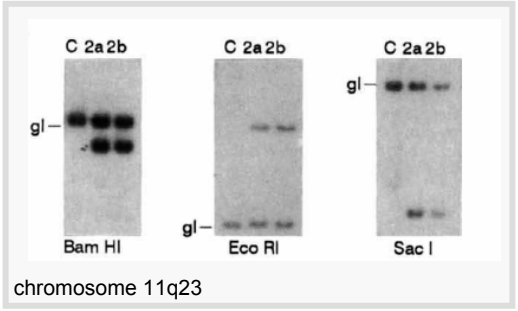
Placental crossing of leukemic cells?

From: Greaves, M. F. et al., Blood 2003

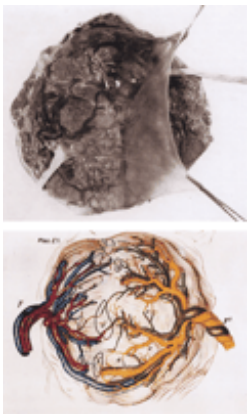
Leukemia in Twins

***In utero* rearrangements in the trithorax-related oncogene in infant leukaemias** NATURE · VOL 363 · 27 MAY 1993

Anthony M. Ford*, Susan A. Ridge*, Maria E. Cabrera†, Hazem Mahmoud‡, C. Michael Steel§, Li C. Chan|| & Mel Greaves*



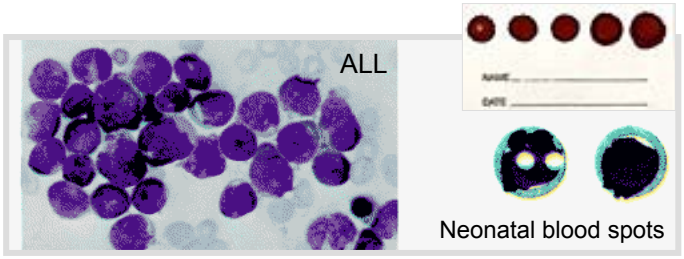
chromosome 11q23



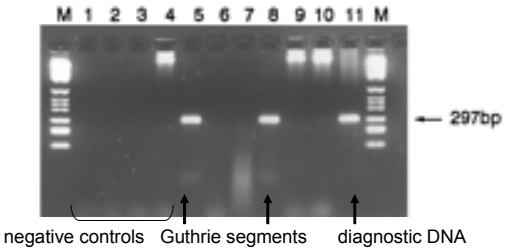
From:
Greaves et al., Blood 2003

Prenatal Origin of Childhood ALL

Gale, …Greaves, PNAS 1997



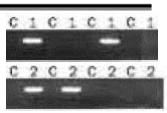
3 patients
5, 6 and 24 mo old
t(4;11), MLL/AF4+



Prenatal Origin of Childhood ALL

Wiemels, …Greaves, Lancet 1999

Patient	Patient's age at diagnosis	Guthrie segments tested	Guthrie segments positive for *TEL-AML1*
K Twin A	3 years 11 months	4	2
K Twin B	4 years	4	2
1	2 years 1 month	3	3
2*	2 years 10 months	4	1
3	3 years 3 months	12	1
4	3 years 4 months	14	0
5	3 years 5 months	12	0
6*	3 years 6 months	4	1
7	3 years 11 months	14	0
8	4 years 3 months	20	6
9*	5 years 1 month	2	2

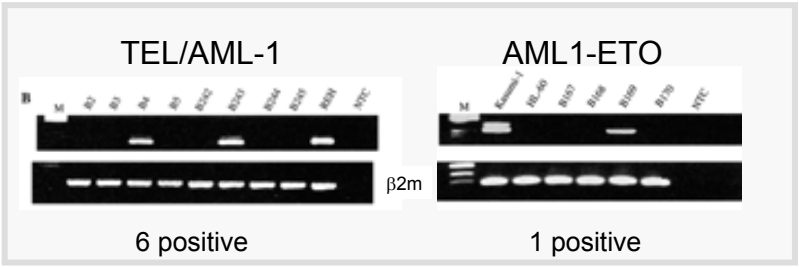


*Patients from Italian centre. Other patients are from UK.

Prenatal Origin of Childhood ALL

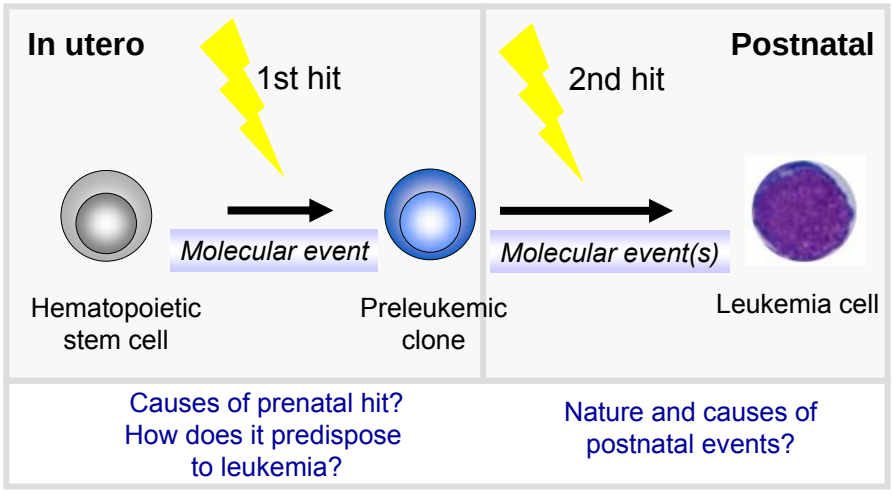
Mori,…, Greaves, PNAS 2002

PCR screening of 496 cord blood samples
for the presence of preleukemic fusion transcripts



⇒ Estimated frequency of fusion gene-positive cord bloods: ~1/100
Frequency of overt childhood leukemia: ~ 4-5/100.000

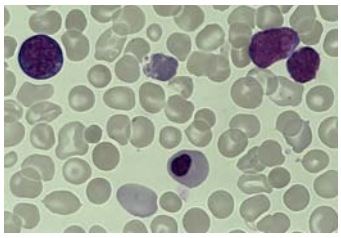
Model for Leukemogenesis in Children



- Natural History of the Disease
- Role of Genetic Factors
- Role of Environmental Factors

Constitutional Chromosomal Abnormalities in Childhood Leukemia

Peripheral blood at birth

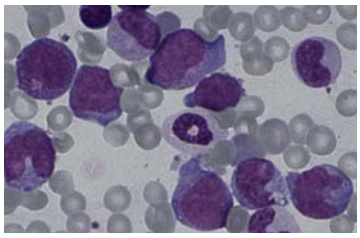


„Transient leukemia“

⇩

Spontaneous resolution within 3 months

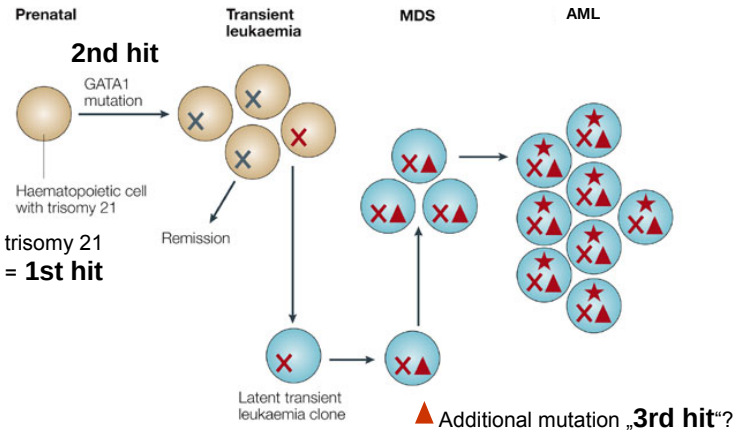
Bone marrow at 2 yrs of age



AML FAB M7

Incidence 500x increased in Down´s syndrome!

Pathogenesis of Down AML



Nature Reviews | Cancer
Hitzler/Zipursky 2005

Constitutional Chromosomal Abnormalities in Childhood Leukemia

	% of childhood leukemias *(Narod, BJC 1991)*
• Down´s syndrome	2.3
• Germline BRCA2 mutations	0.3
• Beckwith-Wiedemann syndrome	
• Neurofibromatosis type I	
• Fanconi´s anemia	
• Shwachman Diamond syndrome	
• Ataxia teleangiectatica	

Inherited susceptibility through normal allelic variation, involved in gene-environment interactions?

- Natural History of the Disease
- Role of Genetic Factors
- Role of Environmental Factors

Prenatal Exposures

Birthweight and Leukemia

Recent population-based case control study, USA:

	Controls ($N = 4980$)	ALL cases ($N = 376$)		AML cases ($N = 85$)	
	%	%	OR[a] [95% CI]	%	OR[a] [95% CI]
Infant characteristics					
Birthweight (g)[b]					
<2500	5.1	5.5	1.2 [0.8, 1.8]	10.0	2.2 [1.1, 4.4]
2500–3999	81.0	74.4	1.0 Reference	74.4	1.0 Reference
4000+	13.9	20.1	1.6 [1.2, 2.0]	15.6	1.2 [0.7, 2.1]

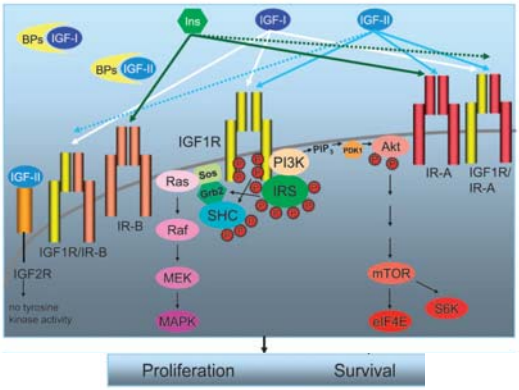
Podvin, Paediatr and Perinatal Epidem 2006

⇒ Association of high birthweight with ALL;
consistent with most but not all studies

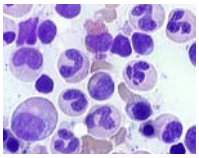
Birthweight and Leukemia

HYPOTHESIS:
Increased fetal exposure to growth hormones?

Big baby



Proliferative stress on hematopoiesis



Maternal Diet during Pregnancy

Naturally occurring **topoisomerase inhibitors**:
Risk factors for infant leukemia?

Soy beans
Fruits, vegetables
Cocoa, tea, wine
Coffee

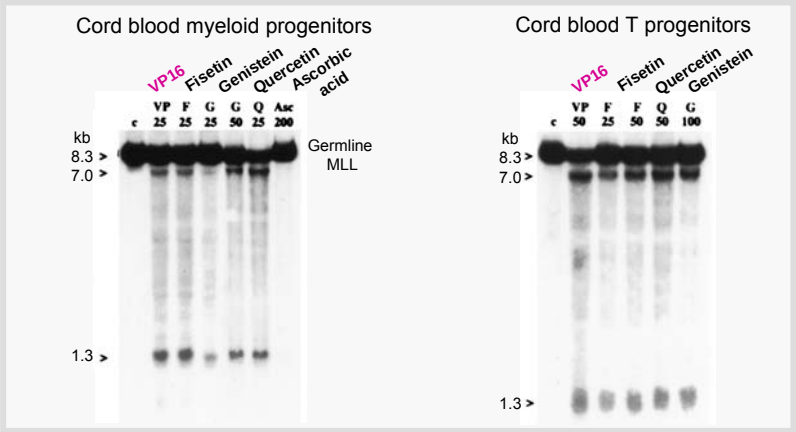
Combined exposure variable ⇩

	n = 84 matched sets			n= 54 matched sets			n = 30 matched sets		
Category of exposure[b]	Overall dataset			infant ALL only			infant AML only[c]		
	OR[d]	(CI)[e]	Cases	OR[d]	(CI)[e]	Cases	OR[d]	(CI)[e]	Cases
Low	1.0	—	21	1.0	—	17	1.0	—	4
Medium	2.1	(0.9-5.0)	38	1.3	(0.4-4.2)	26	9.8	(1.1-84.8)	12
High	1.1	(0.5-2.3)	23	0.5	(0.2-1.4)	10	10.2	(1.1-96.4)	13

Ross, Cancer Causes Control 1996

Maternal Diet during Pregnancy

Dietary bioflavonoids cause *MLL* gene cleavage in human hematopoietic progenitor cells by inhibition of topoisomerase II



Strick,..., Rowley. PNAS 2000

Radiation

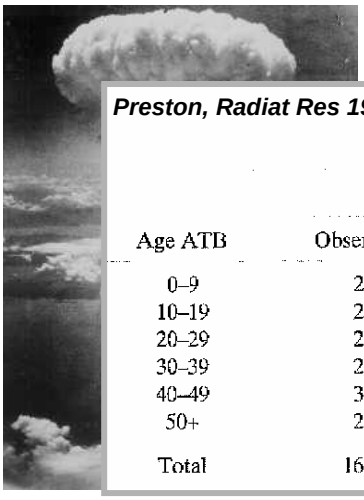
Marie Curie
The Nobel Prize in Physics 1903
The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1911

Died from leukemia
aged 66

Irène Joliot-Curie
The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1935

Died from leukemia
aged 58

Radiation-induced Leukemia: Atomic Bomb



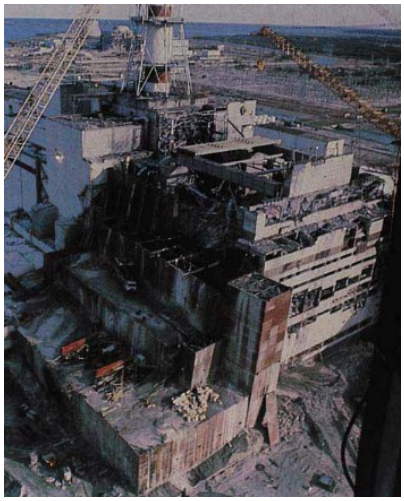
Preston, Radiat Res 1994

Leukemia Deaths by Age at Exposure
among 93,696 survivors

	1950–1975		1976–1985	
Age ATB	Observed	Excess	Observed	Excess
0–9	29	20	3	–3
10–19	29	18	7	–2
20–29	21	12	8	1
30–39	21	6	22	12
40–49	37	15	15	4
50+	23	–1	6	2
Total	160	70	61	14

Hiroshima, August 6, 1945

Nuclear Accidents and Leukemia



Chernobyl, April 26, 1986

Reports from

- Soviet Union — Ivanov Nature 1993; Davis Int J Epid 2006
- Sweden — Hjalmars BMJ 1994
- Finland — Auvinen BMJ 1994
- England — Cartwright Lancet 1998
- Scotland — Gibson Lancet 1988
- Germany — Michaelis Nature 1997
- Greece — Petridou Nature 1996

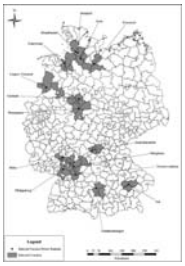
No strong evidence for increased risk of childhood AL

Residence near Nuclear Power Plants

KiKK study, Germany (Spix et al., EJC 2008)

Null hypothesis: No association between proximity of housing to a nuclear power plant and the risk of cancer ≤5 yrs of age

Preselected areas around 16 nuclear power plants
1592 cases: All cancers ≤5 yrs in 1980-2003
4735 matched controls



⇒ Null hypothesis rejected
⇒ Statistically significant effect for ALL
⇒ Population-attributable risk of 0.3% for housing within 5 km

Electromagnetic Field Exposure

- Initial report in 1979 (Wertheimer and Leeper)
- No association in large studies from U.S.A, U.K., Canada (Linet NEJM 1997; Cheng Lancet 1999; McBride Am J Epidem 1999)
- Metaanalysis (Ahlbom BJC 2000)

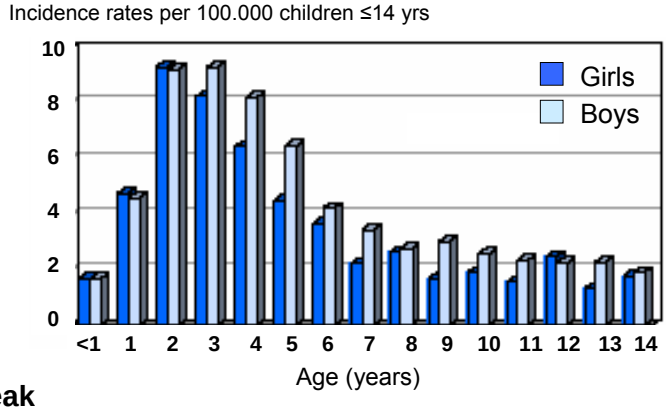
Relative risks (95% CI)

Measurement studies	0.1–<0.2 μT	0.2–<0.4 μT	≥0.4 μT
Canada	1.33 (0.85–2.07)	1.44 (0.79–2.60)	1.65 (0.68–4.01)
Germany	1.29 (0.58–2.89)	2.19 (0.62–7.71)	2.21 (0.29–16.7)
New Zealand	0.71 (0.21–2.44)	3 cases/0 ctrls	0 cases/0 ctrls
UK	0.89 (0.59–1.34)	0.87 (0.42–1.84)	0.88 (0.23–3.39)
USA	1.11 (0.81–1.53)	1.01 (0.65–1.57)	3.44 (1.24–9.54)
Calculated fields studies			
Denmark	0 cases/2 ctrls	0 cases/8 ctrls	2 cases/0 ctrls
Finland	0 cases/19 ctrls	4.31 (0.50–37.2)	6.79 (0.74–62.6)
Norway	2.25 (0.78–6.55)	1.49 (0.30–7.45)	0 cases/10 ctrls
Sweden	0.88 (0.11–7.19)	0 cases/20 ctrls	3.46 (0.84–14.3)
Summary			
Measurement studies	1.07 (0.87–1.31)	1.15 (0.84–1.56)	1.95 (1.14–3.35)
Calculated fields studies	1.42 (0.58–3.45)	0.84 (0.25–2.81)	2.62 (0.88–6.65)
All studies	1.08 (0.88–1.32)	1.12 (0.84–1.51)	2.08 (1.30–3.33)

Increased risk at highest exposure levels (>0.4 μT)

Socioeconomic Status

Age-specific Incidence of ALL



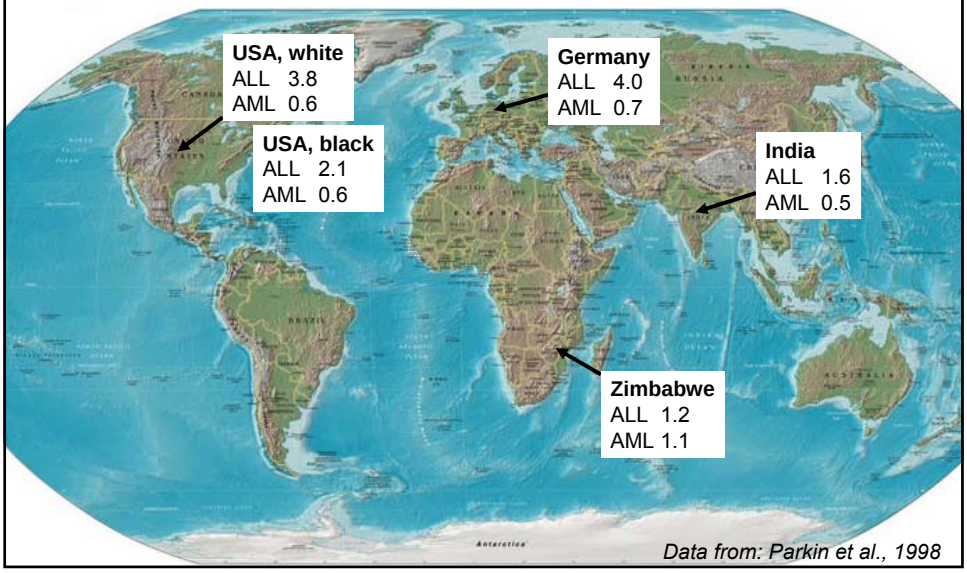
Age peak

- Emerged at beginning of 20th century
- Restricted to B cell precursor ALL
- Lacks in less developed countries

Kinderkrebsregister Mainz
1980-2003

Geographical Pattern

Annual rates per 100 000 in children (≤14 yrs)



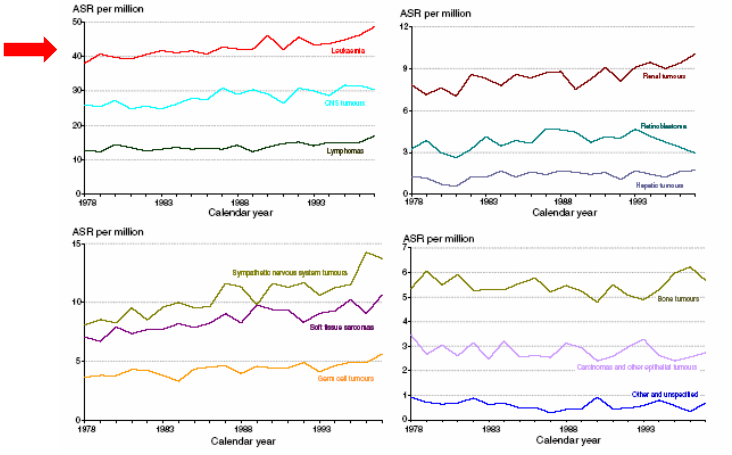
Data from: Parkin et al., 1998

EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF CANCER 42 (2006) 1961–1971

Time trends of cancer incidence in European children (1978–1997): Report from the Automated Childhood Cancer Information System project

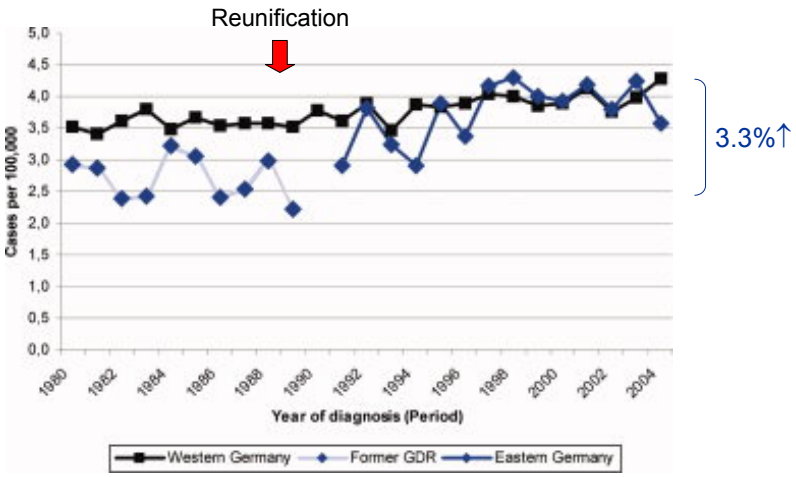
Peter Kaatsch[a,], Eva Steliarova-Foucher[b], Emanuele Crocetti[c], Corrado Magnani[d], Claudia Spix[a], Paola Zambon[e]*

33 population-based cancer registries in 15 European countries (77,111 cases)

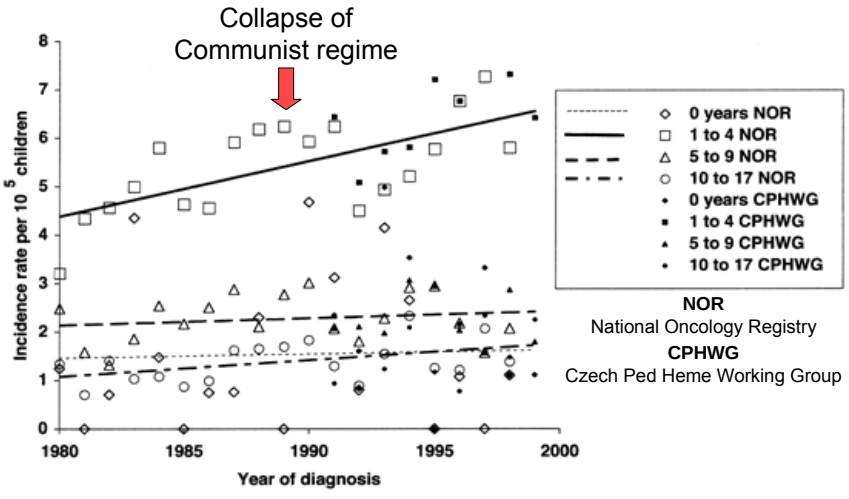


ALL Incidence during Economic Transition: Western and Eastern Germany

Spix et al., Int J Cancer 2008



ALL Incidence during Economic Transition: Czech Republic *(Hrusak, Leukemia 2002)*



NOR
National Oncology Registry
CPHWG
Czech Ped Heme Working Group

Factors linked with Affluence and Modernization

- Maternal age at child-bearing
- Increased exposure to magnetic fields
- Breast-feeding
- Sibship size
- Early child care
- High hygiene level
- Rates of immunization

Infections and immunity?

Infectious Etiology?

The Greaves hypothesis *(Leukemia 1988)*

Correlation between affluence/modernization and peak ALL incidence at 2-5 years

⇩

„Delayed-infection hypothesis“:

Inadequate priming of the immune system, followed by abnormal immune response during late exposure towards common infections

Evidence for Delayed-Infection Hypothesis

Day-care attendance in infancy and risk of childhood ALL

Country	Number of cases	Period	Odds ratio* (confidence interval‡)	References
Greece	136	0–2 years	0.28 (0.09–0.88)	Petridou 1993
New Zealand	121	0–1 year	0.65 (0.36–1.17)§	Dockerty 1999
Quebec	491	0–1 year	0.49 (0.31–0.77)	Infante-Rivard 2000
Hong Kong	98	0–1 year	0.63 (0.38–1.07)§	Chan 2002
France	240	From birth onwards	0.6 (0.4–1.0)	Perrillat 2002
France	408	0–3 months	0.6 (0.4–0.8)	Jourdan-Da Silva 2004
California (a)	140	0–1 year	0.6 (0.45–0.95)	Ma 2002
California (b) ‖	294	0–1 year	0.42 (0.18–0.99)	Ma 2005
United Kingdom**	1286	0–1 year	0.48 (0.37–0.62)¶ 0.69 (0.51–0.93)#	Gilham 2005
United States of America‡‡	1744	0–6 months	0.91 (0.72–1.15)§	Neglia 2000

From: Mel Greaves, Nat Rev Cancer 2006

Type I Diabetes and Childhood Leukemia

„Hygiene hypothesis“
Yazdanbakhsh, Science 2002

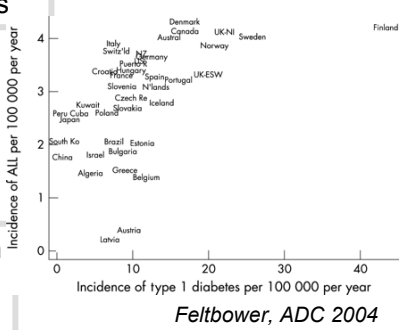
Protection against type I diabetes

Exposure to infections early in life

?

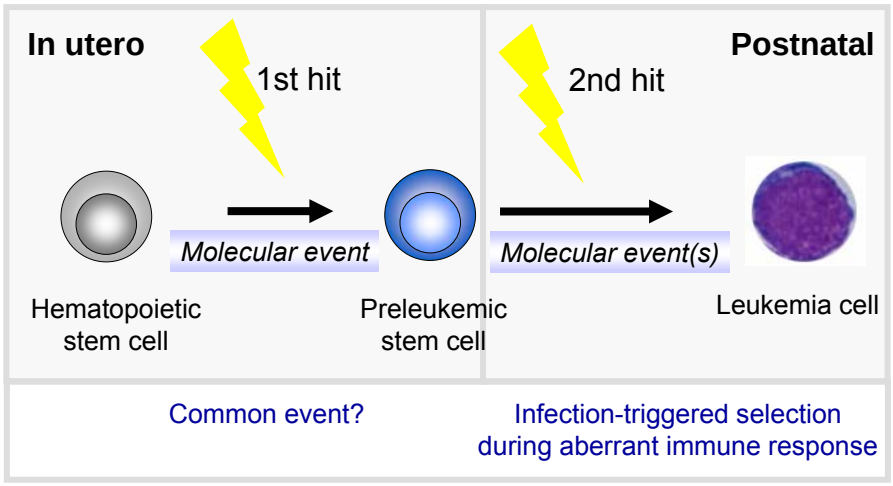
Protection against ALL

„Delayed-infection hypothesis“
Greaves, Leukemia 1988



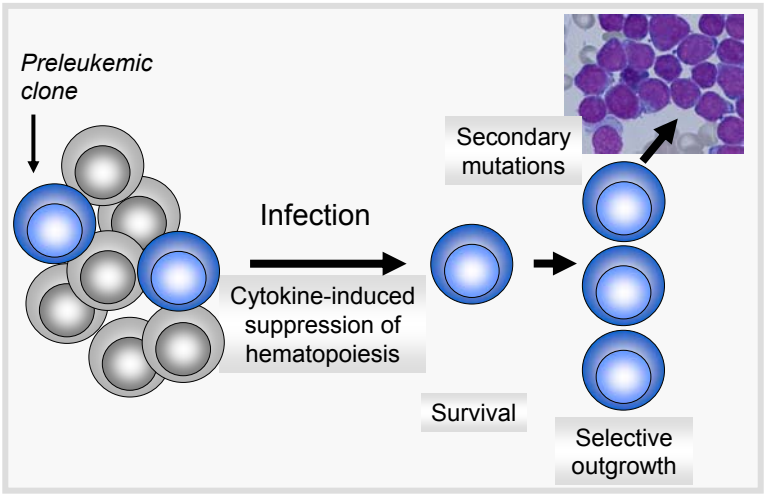
Feltbower, ADC 2004

Model for Leukemogenesis in Children



Model for Infection-based Selection of Preleukemic Clones

Adapted from Greaves, Nat Rev Cancer 2006



Summary

The cause of childhood leukemia remains unresolved.

One common cause is highly unlikely.

Most cases are not attributable to a single specific genetic disorder or environmental exposure

Abnormal immune response during delayed infections is a plausible etiological mechanism – proliferative stress.

Large-scale studies are needed, including biologic specimens, to investigate gene-environment interactions.