

Dana-Farber/Boston Children's physician leads first Sickle Cell Awareness Walk in Liberia

The Global Health Initiative (GHI) at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders recently co-sponsored the first Sickle Cell Awareness Walk in Monrovia, Liberia. Led by Venee Tubman, MD, a pediatric hematologist/oncologist at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's, the walk raised awareness about sickle cell disease (SCD) and brought together people affected by the condition.


"I am very excited about how well the walk went, especially for our first event," says Tubman, who travels to Liberia twice a year to work on improving the quality of pediatric care.

SCD is an inherited disorder that causes blood cells to become stiff and sickle-shaped, which makes it difficult for cells to move through blood vessels and carry oxygen to the body. The disease is six times more common in Liberia than in the United States.

Through a partnership with Monrovia's John F. Kennedy Medical Center, Tubman has focused on investigating incidence rates and prevalence of SCD and developing a program for newborn screening and clinical care.

As a result of the screening program, the number of SCD diagnoses in Liberia has tripled, but many families do not know about the disease or how it is treated, Tubman says. The walk, held Aug. 31, educated these families and other members of the community about SCD.

Around 60 people walked, Tubman says. Afterward, the group held a short educational session about SCD.

"For a few days after the walk, I ran into people who had participated or bystanders in the area who would mention it," Tubman says. "Just with that little bit of feedback, I know we absolutely achieved our purpose." 



Venee Tubman, MD