

B'luru teen defeats cancer, bags 2 medals at international games

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Bengaluru: A 14-year-old Bengaluru boy has not only defeated cancer, but also bagged two medals at the World Children's Winners Games 2019, organised for cancer survivors, in Moscow between July 4 and 7.

Hritik Machaiah Alamananda was the only participant from Karnataka among 10 children who represented India at the international sports competition, wherein he won gold in swimming and silver in chess.

"I got to learn a lot during the preparations and even later on. It was a wonderful experience," said Hritik.

Thought knee pain was minor issue

All of this could have been a distant dream when Hritik was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour — Ewing sarcoma, which grows on bones and soft tissues — in his right knee in December 2016 at Tata Hospital, Mumbai. "He used to complain a lot about knee pain. We presumed he might have injured himself while playing and at worst, it might be a ligament tear," said Reena

These kids are an inspiration: PM Modi

Hritik and nine other students who participated and won medals at the World Children's Winners Games 2019 were mentioned and lauded by PM Narendra Modi in his Mann ki Baat address on July 28.

"Champions emerge after they win medals. But these kids were champions even before they participated in these games, by emerging winners in a battle with cancer," said Modi, explaining the speciality of the games in which only cancer survivors participate.

Bheemaiah, Hritik's mother.

But when the pain did not subside even after 15 days, Hritik's parents decided to get it checked. He underwent an MRI and a biopsy before being diagnosed with cancer. The treatment stretched for the whole of 2017 and he was then referred to Cytecure Hospital in Bengaluru to continue the treatment.

Picked for games after winning cancer battle

"Initially it was devastating. It was too hard even to accept it, but we decided to be fiercely positive no matter what.



BEATING THE ODDS: Hritik was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in his right knee in December 2016

World Children's Winners Games

The World Children's Winners Games, which began in 2010, is held every year in Russia and is organised by Russian NGO Podari Zhizn with a focus on rehabilitation of young cancer survivors. The games' website says, "The games are more than just a competition. It's a real festival, for those who scored a very important victory — victory over their disease!"

Flight to Moscow

Accompanied by his mother, Hritik flew to Moscow for the games in July and picked four games — swimming, table tennis, chess and air-rifle shooting — out of the six events. He skipped football and running to avoid strain.

Hritik is now a lot more cheerful and is positive after emerging as a winner in the global games.

"There is stigma and fear attached to cancer. We never let it overshadow the hope," said Reena, who works as a part-time trainer for nursery school teachers.

We would keep saying everything will work out. I would ask him to repeat that he is going to be fine," said Reena.

And things did go fine. Declared cancer-free by December 2017, Hritik was chosen by a team of doctors at Tata Hospital to participate in the cancer survivors' games based on his recovery.

"Ameeta Bhatia, counsellor and social worker with Tata Hospital's ImPaCCT (Improving Paediatric Cancer Care and Treatment) Foundation, was our team leader and she guided us throughout. It was teamwork!" added Reena.