

## MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH PRIMARY IMMUNE DEFICIENCY - OUR 15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

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In 2005, within the framework of an international project (J-Project) in the University Hospital "Alexandrovska" we developed and introduced a program with diagnostic criteria and therapeutic management of children with primary immune deficiencies (PID). Thanks to information broad and regular PID awareness campaigns, increasing number of children are referred and tested for possible underlying immune deficiency.

For a period of 15 years, we investigated the immune status of 179 children (105 boys, 74 girls) with an average age of  $5.82 \pm 3.59$  years. Of these children in 29 no significant abnormalities or a slight disturbance of the immunobiological balance between the immune cells and other components of the immune response was described. The remaining children have some deficiency in any part of their immune system (combined or humoral immune deficiency). Patients with severe impairment of immunobiological balance and decreased T cells predominate. Appropriate immune therapy (substitution with immunoglobulins and/or immunomodulators) with good effect was started in all children.

The efforts of pediatricians and clinical immunologists during all these years were focused on early detection of children with immune deficiencies, outlining the patient's path - from pre-hospital to specialized care and timely inclusion of specific therapy. As a result, the time from the initial symptoms to the diagnosis was shortened, the risk groups were specified in more detail, and appropriate health care was provided for all PID patients in Bulgaria, including free access to substitution therapy.