

SolveSickle

Newsletter

October 2026/ Vol.3



Annual Gala



Hope Behind the Mask

DEC 05, 2026, 5:00 PM



The 5th Annual Black Tie Gala, benefitting The Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, promises an unforgettable evening of elegance and impact. Building on the incredible success of last year's gala, the event returns with even greater ambition, aiming to raise critical funds and awareness for individuals and families affected by sickle cell disease. This year's gala will return to the sophisticated Atlanta Airport Marriott Gateway for a night filled with fine dining, entertainment, and heartfelt giving. To learn more visit [SCFG's 5th Annual Black Tie Gala](#)



FDA Expands Gene Therapy Option for Young Children Living With Sickle Cell Disease

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has expanded its approval of Casgevy (exagamglogene autotemcel) to include patients aged 2 and older with sickle cell disease (SCD) who experience recurrent vaso-occlusive crises, as well as patients with transfusion-dependent β thalassemia. This marks the first gene therapy approved for children aged 2 and older with SCD.



2026 SICKLE CELL EDUCATION DAY AFLAC CANCER & BLOOD DISORDERS CENTER CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE OF ATLANTA

SolveSickle was invited by Aflac Cancer & Blood Disorders Center of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) to participate in Sickle Cell Education Day at Arthur M. Blank Hospital on September 26, 2026. Participation strengthened SolveSickle's relationship with key partners and increased visibility of the Initiative's statewide work among patients, families and community stakeholders. The event also provided a valuable opportunity to gather direct community perspectives, expand awareness of available resources, and reinforce SolveSickle's role in advancing education, collaboration, and improved outcomes for Georgians living with sickle cell disease.



REMEMBERING AND HONORING DR. ABDULLAH KUTLAR

A month after his passing, we continue to reflect with deep gratitude on the life and legacy of Dr. Abdullah Kutlar.

Dr. Kutlar shared his wisdom, leadership, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of those living with SCD. His decades of service as a compassionate physician, accomplished scientist, mentor, and advocate touched countless patients, families, and colleagues across Georgia and beyond.

We are grateful for his guidance, his partnership, and the lasting impact he made on the sickle cell community.



RESEARCH CONTINUES TO EXPAND GENE-EDITING POSSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SCD

A Phase 3 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine evaluated exagamglogene autotemcel (exa-cel), a CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing therapy, in patients ages 12–35 with severe sickle cell disease (SCD) (Frangoul et al., 2024). The treatment increases fetal hemoglobin production to help reduce red blood cell sickling.

Key Findings

- 97% of evaluable patients experienced no severe vaso-occlusive crises for at

- least 12 consecutive months.
- 100% went at least 12 consecutive months without hospitalization for severe vaso-occlusive crises.
- Patients showed improved hemoglobin levels and quality-of-life measures.

Safety: All 44 treated patients experienced adverse events, with 95% experiencing Grade 3 or 4 events, many

- associated with the required conditioning regimen. No cancers or graft failures were reported during the study period. Long-term follow-up is ongoing to assess safety and durability of treatment benefits.

For more information visit [The New England Journal of Medicine](#)

-

WHO Expands Global Focus on Sickle Cell Disease Care for Children

In September, the World Health Organization announced efforts to expand access to lifesaving SCD treatment and care for children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of global SCD cases occur.

WHO recently issued its first guideline specifically addressing diagnosis, prevention and clinical management of SCD in children and adolescents ages 0–19.

The guidance includes a strong recommendation for hydroxyurea for children and adolescents with sickle cell anemia from 9 months through 19 years, regardless of clinical severity.

Virtual Town Hall Event

Who: UCSF Sickle Cell Center of Excellence

When: October 24th 11:00- 12:30 pm PST

Why: To share updates on its new CRISPR gene-editing clinical trial for sickle cell disease, featuring Dr. Mark Walters and the first patient to receive the investigational treatment and her family.

Audience: Patients, families, caregivers, advocates, and healthcare professionals

Where: Register [here](#)



RESEARCHERS EXPLORE WHY PATIENTS RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO HYDROXYUREA

A study by Sclafani et al., on Hydroxyurea Response in Hemoglobinopathies Patients Using Genetic Markers and Liquid Erythroid Cultures, examined gene expression in patients with SCD receiving hydroxyurea, untreated patients, and healthy controls. Researchers identified differences in genes associated with energy production, cellular maintenance, immune function, and inflammation. These findings may provide insight into SCD progression and hydroxyurea's effects, potentially informing future treatment strategies.

To learn more visit the [National Library of Medicine](#).



Researchers Investigate New Biomarkers for Sickle Cell Disease



A September 2026 study in the American Journal of Hematology examined circulating nucleated red blood cells in adults with SCD. Researchers analyzed 270 adults with HbSS or HbS β^0 -thalassemia and found circulating nucleated red blood cells in 65.6% of participants. The study explores whether these cells may provide useful information about disease characteristics.

For more information visit the [American Journal of Hematology](#).

AI AND NETWORK MEDICINE COULD HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SICKLE CELL RESEARCH

The Future Directions in Sickle Cell Disease Using Network Medicine and AI Integration workshop took place September 15–16, 2026. Attendees were invited to attend the workshop virtually via NIH VideoCast.

The overarching goals of the workshop were to:

- Foster cross-disciplinary collaborations by bringing together researchers in distinct scientific fields to advance scientific discovery in sickle cell disease (SCD)
- Prioritize research questions that integrate new models for drug discovery and endpoint validation while advancing our understanding of the pathophysiology of SCD
- Encourage bold thinking that explores new technologies and models while connecting scientific disciplines in new ways

Together, these will accelerate the development of predictive, translational platforms that support both basic pathophysiological studies and precision therapeutic development in SCD.

