

HISTORY AND CHALLENGES OF A YOUNG PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY UNIT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN A CONTEXT OF UNSAFETY AND COVID-19 PANDEMY

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Background : the pediatric oncology unit of Bobo-Dioulasso was born in the difficult context of unsafety due to terrorism in Burkina Faso and of Covid19 pandemy. Nevertheless, local initiatives and external support allowed its creation and the care of over one hundred children affected.

Material and Methods : description of the different steps that led to the creation of the Pediatric Oncology Unit (POU) of Bobo-Dioulasso ; mention of several impediments linked to terrorism and covid-19 ; description of the care activities since their beginning ; point of challenges and perspectives.

Results : the regular admissions of children with cancers motivated a study that allowed to make an inventory of cases in 2010 (Figure 1). The main feature was the refusal of treatment by families (36%), since they were almost systematically referred to Ouagadougou, 365 km away. Formalized activities were started at Bobo-Dioulasso in 2019, with the support of the POU of Ouagadougou. However, in the context of terrorism and Covid-19, the development of the new unit was not a priority for local authorities. The unit joined GFAOP in December 2020. Two nurses from CHUSS participated in an online training organized by the GFAOP. A collaboration with a local women LIONS club led to the renovation and equipment of the unit (figure 2).

Since January 2019, 143 children with cancers have been treated in the POU of Bobo-Dioulasso. The number of cases was gradually increasing (Table 1) and there was a predominance of Burkitt lymphoma, followed by leukemia and nephroblastoma (Figure 3).



Figure 2 : Photos of the POU of Bobo-Dioulasso, showing inpatient ward before (A) and after renovation (B), a recently completed playroom (C and D), and a general view of the Pediatric building (E)

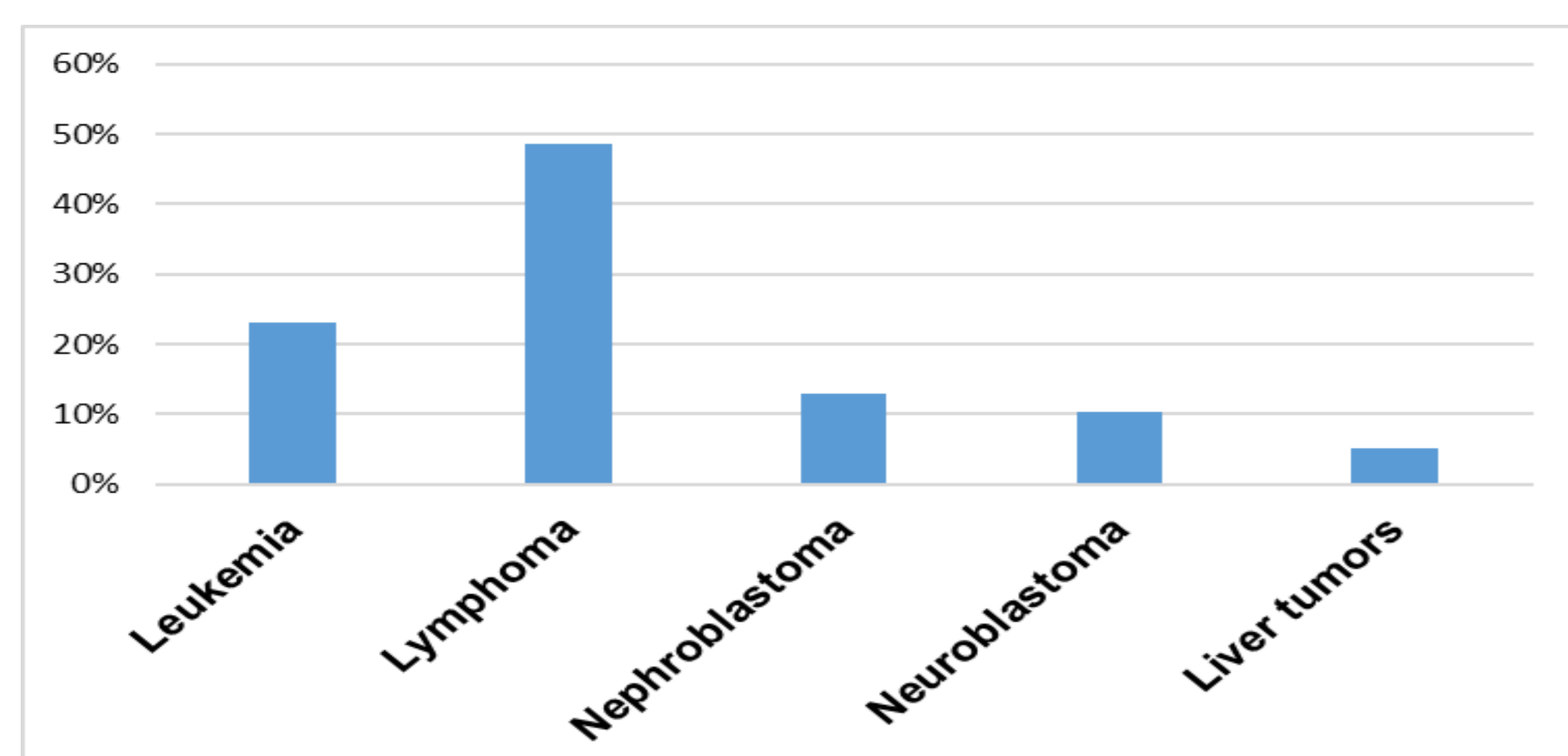


Figure 1 : Types and proportions of childhood neoplasia observed at the POU of Bobo-Dioulasso in 2010

Table 1 : Progression of childhood cancers at the POU of Bobo-Dioulasso from 2019 to 2022

Year	2019	2020	2021	1 st half 2022
Number of cases	52	39	37	34

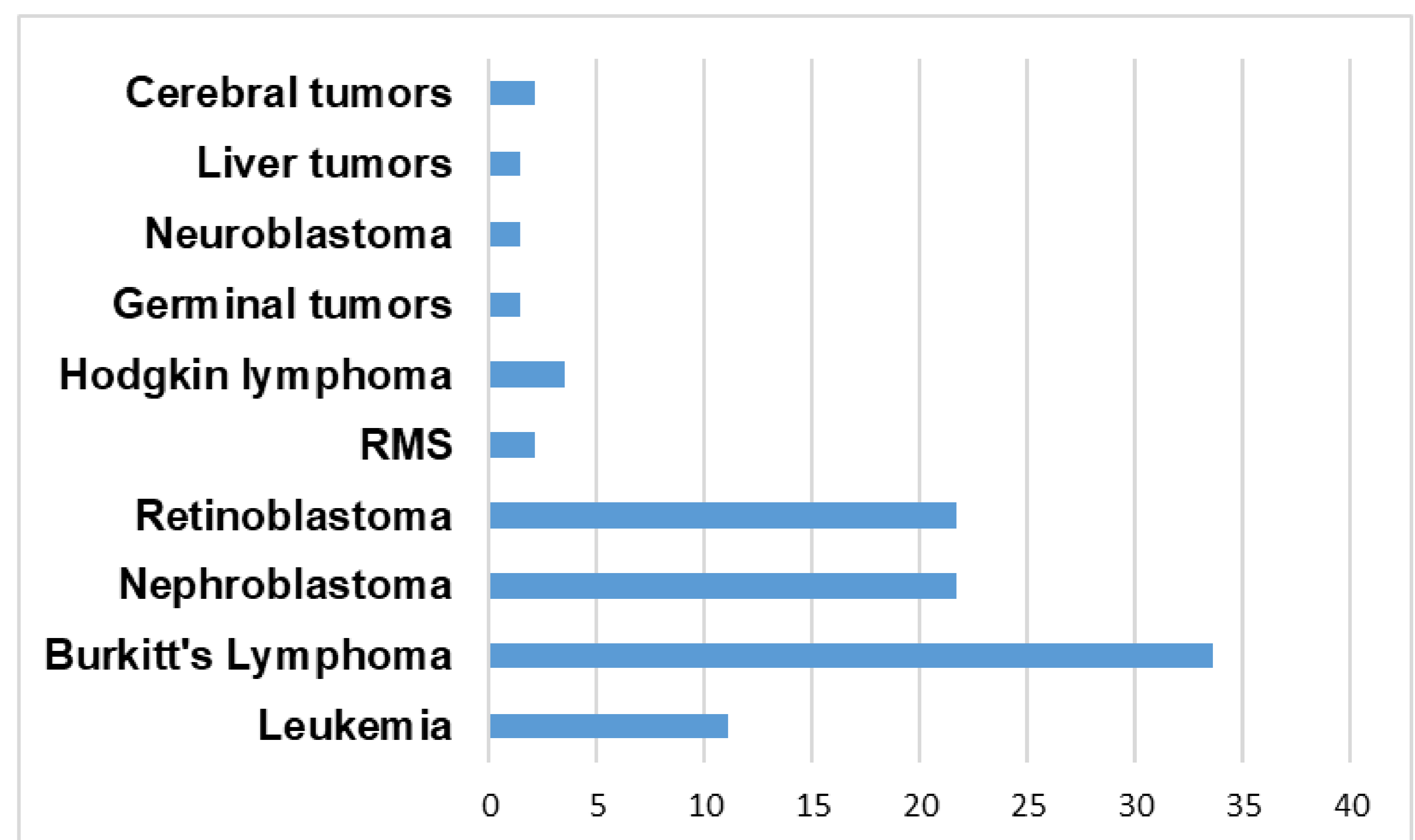


Figure 3 : Types and proportions of childhood cancers observed at the POU of Bobo-Dioulasso from 2019 to 2022

Discussion / Conclusion : The care of children with cancer is a reality in Bobo-Dioulasso. However, several challenges of which, supply of anti-cancer drugs and fight against dropout from treatment are remaining. The covid19 pandemy has impacted the number of cases in 2020 ; currently, the massive displacement of populations due to insecurity is certainly not conducive to early diagnosis and optimal management of cases. Nevertheless, the perspectives are good, with a better involvement of the highest health authorities in the battle against childhood cancers.