

Rory enjoys time out from fighting cancer

Seven-year-old Rory Gardiner is one operation away from a purple heart bead.

This will add to the 734 Beads of Courage he has collected since March when he was diagnosed with cancer.

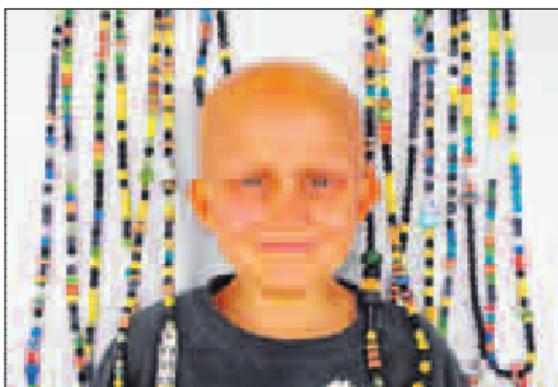
Two brain tumours were detected in CT and MRI scans after Rory had been unwell with sporadic headaches and vomiting for six weeks.

In March and April, Rory underwent surgery six times.

The main tumour, which was a little smaller than a tennis ball was removed, and the second tumour on his hypothalamus was reduced in size.

Rory suffered complications and a shunt was placed under the skin on his head to drain away the buildup of cerebral spinal fluid.

In May and June Rory completed 31 sessions of radiotherapy to his brain and spine. He was required to lie face down on the radiotherapy table with his face completely enclosed in a plastic mask to minimise movement. He was given tattoos on his



Brave little battler: Rory Gardiner among the beads of courage he has wracked up in his battle against cancer.

spine to allow for perfect alignment.

Rory was given a month off away from Starship hospital in July. He enjoyed spending time with family in Northland and Taranaki, exploring some wild places such as Kai Iwi Lakes and Mt Taranaki, and spending time with his class, room 3 at Dargaville Primary School.

Rory returned to Starship for four cycles of chemotherapy in August. His cancer is high risk so he received high doses of the chemotherapy drugs.

These were followed by stem cell transplants to support his immune system.

The chemotherapy cycles were spaced only 28 days apart.

After each cycle Rory would get to spend a few days at Ronald McDonald House before returning to the oncology ward with an infection.

He always managed to squeeze in a few days at home between cycles and these were a blessing.

After the first chemotherapy cycle Rory was fitted with a naso-gastric tube as he had lost consider-

able weight. The tube provided him with food, fluid, and medicine for three months as he lost the desire to eat and drink.

Rory was discharged from Starship on November 18.

His treatment is almost complete. He is scheduled to have an operation on December 17 to remove the IV line in his chest.

He is now moving into the next phase in his fight against cancer – remission, monitoring and long-term care. He will have an MRI scan at the end of next month and will be monitored every three months.

He will also join a programme for survivors of childhood cancer.

But he still has the radiant smile, cheeky personality, and bright green sneakers which he is well known for.

Like every seven-year-old he is excited about Santa's impending visit and spending Christmas holidays with the people he loves.

You can read about Rory's battle and offer support at www.rorygardiner.co.nz.