In 2012, for the first time, survey data on the number of paediatric transplants were collected, either from dedicated paediatric transplant centres or in centres performing transplants in both adults (over 18 years of age at transplant) and paediatrics. A total of 4,041 transplants – 2,877 (71%) allogeneic and 1,164 (29%) autologous – were reported in patients under the age of 18.

For this reason, The European Society for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT) Nurses Group formed a Paediatric Committee to give paediatric nurses the knowledge essential for dealing with children and adolescents in this area. The principal aim of the committee is to improve the care of paediatric and adolescent stem cell transplant (SCT) patients and to promote, develop and share knowledge between paediatric nurses.

What did we do?
First, we launched a survey among nurses involved in the STC field to find out what paediatric nurses’ hopes were of this committee. Sixty one questionnaires were returned from 18 countries (Australia, Chile, Israel, Saudi Arabia among them, as well as Europe) and from a total of 46 hospitals.

To make it easier to share information and knowledge among paediatric nurses, we identified a contact nurse in most paediatric SCT centres in Europe and in that way developed our own database with our own email address penuco3@gmail.com. Now, we have more than 151 contact nurses with details from more than 51 transplant centres, from more than 28 countries and over 50 cities. We are really happy with this number but we are always looking for new contacts to add.

The EBMT Paediatric Nurses Committee works closely with the EBMT Paediatric Diseases Working Party and the European School of Haematology (ESH) to develop and deliver the ESH-EBMT training course for paediatricians and paediatric nurses on hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) in children and adolescents. Lectures about pain assessment, fertility preservation and late effects after transplantation have been given by nurses. The courses were held in 2009 and 2011 in Genoa, Italy, and in 2013 in Bucharest, Romania, and were addressed specifically to postgraduate/resident level young physicians and paediatric nurses. Our next course will be Marrakech, Morocco, from 14-17 May 2015.

Other educational projects have included a collaboration with Russian nurses, and a one-week Educational Programme has been held twice in Moscow and once in St Petersburg. We also held an EBMT Outreach Volunteer Health Professionals Circle last September in Florence, Italy, for doctors and nurses interested in volunteering for activities related to improving global access to bone marrow transplant (BMT).

For the future, one of our goals is to improve collaboration between paediatric BMT units and paediatric intensive care units. The first step will be a survey in order to better understand the current situation in the different centres.

To find out more about EBMT events and training courses go to www.ebmt.org/Contents/Education/EBMT%20Events/Pages/EBMT-Events.aspx