

Mother Documents Child's Last Days

MILFORD, Conn. (AP) — The mother of a 4-year-old girl who is dying of cancer says she has saved every scrap of paper the child has drawn on and has tape-recorded conversations with her daughter for the last 10 days.

Patti Calistro has recorded the progress of her daughter's disease and plans to write a book based on her experience.

"After she dies, I want to have a program so all the people who have known her and helped us can touch her," she said.

She said her daughter, Amber, has reconciled herself to the reality that she will die soon from cancer — probably within a few days.

"At first she was scared," Ms. Calistro said. "'Mommy, I don't want to leave you,' she would say. But in the last week and a half she has made progress. She wants to die and be with God."

Amber's cancer, rhabdomyosarcoma, was diagnosed by doctors at Yale-New Haven Hospital last March, after surgery following a fall that had opened the growing lump on her head.

Now a saucer-sized tumor, which continues to grow, distorts the right side of her head, and doctors say she could die at any moment. She is treated with morphine and other pain-killing drugs.

Ms. Calistro said she will be satisfied if she can keep Amber out of pain in her last hours.

"Of course I will be hurt and upset when she dies," Ms. Calistro said on Friday, her voice unwavering. "But I have told her everything I want to tell her, and she has told me that she will be here always, even if physically she isn't."

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