

Milford tot in Bahamas for cancer therapy

By JUDI DOHERTY
Staff Reporter

Amber Calistro, the 4-year-old Milford girl who is suffering from cancer, was scheduled to arrive today on Grand Bahama Island in the British Bahamas to begin an experimental and controversial treatment program.

Her mother, Patricia Calistro, is confident she has made the right decision about her daughter's therapy. "If there is a hope for Amber, then this is it," she said just before they left Milford for Florida and the Bahamas.

Ms. Calistro has spent weeks sifting the confusing and often contradictory information about cancer cures and decided to take the girl to the Bahamas for treatment after talking to a number of people who were familiar with the program.

The treatment, called immuno-augmentative

therapy, is offered by the Immunology Researching Center in Freeport on Grand Bahama Island. Headed by Lawrence Burton, the center uses various techniques intended to stimulate the body's natural immune system in fighting the cancer cells.

The treatment schedule is a minimum of two months, Ms. Calistro said, and the family's living expenses will be covered in part by a \$3,000 gift donation from a woman who heard of Amber's plight.

Locally, a fund drive has been under way to raise enough money to send Amber to Disney World in Florida before her illness grows worse. Ms. Calistro said the money that has been raised was used to take Amber to Disney World for a few days before going to the Bahamas to begin treatment.

Ms. Calistro said she has been surprised and touched at the support she has been receiving from friends and strangers alike.

She said she sees Amber as "a symbol for all the people who need help," and when her troubles are over, one way or another, Ms. Calistro said, "I plan on doing a lot for a lot of different people."

The little girl, her mother said, was tremendously excited about the trip, although the strain of her disease is beginning to show.

"She can't sleep," Ms. Calistro said. "She can't unwind. It's as if she doesn't want to be alone with her thoughts."

Amber's battle against cancer began last fall when her mother found a lump behind the girl's right ear. Despite numerous visits to several doctors, the lump was not diagnosed as cancer until the girl was finally taken to Yale-New Haven Hospital in March.

(Please turn to page 2)