

Braving the Cold of Antarctica to Raise Money for Cancer

Mitchel Beres ran 10 miles around McMurdo Station for Obliteride 2020.

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It takes a global community to find cures for cancer — even people in Antarctica.

Mitchel Beres has lived on the icy continent for almost a year. He was one of the nearly 3,200 participants in this year's [Obliteride](#), an annual event to raise funds for scientific research at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. [The 2020 event went virtual](#), inviting people everywhere to take on any challenge they could dream up to raise money for research on cancer and COVID-19. The Obliteride community has already raised nearly \$3 million this year, and fundraising continues through Sept. 17.

Participants biked, walked, ran, climbed mountains, did yoga and undertook other DIY pursuits. But few had an experience quite like Beres'. For his Obliteride activity, he bundled up to run 10 miles in temperatures of minus-13 degrees Fahrenheit, with wind gusts of over 30 miles per hour that made it feel like minus-40 and slashed visibility to just a quarter-mile.

We got in touch with Beres to learn a little more about why he decided to participate this year and what it's like to do so in one of the least hospitable environments on Earth.

What do you do in Antarctica, and how long have you been there?

I work as a field safety coordinator at [McMurdo Station](#), which is about a 6-hour flight south from New Zealand. Essentially, I conduct field training and Antarctic survival courses for scientific researchers and other staff, help establish safe routes across the ice shelves and sea ice when researchers need to reach another field site, and lead the winter search and rescue team. I've been on base here almost a year now but am headed back to the United States soon.

Can you describe what it's like to run in weather like that?

Imagine standing 10 feet in front of a snowblower pointed directly at your face. Add some goggles and a lot of layers, and it's a bit like that!

Layering is definitely the most difficult part — and it can be tricky to find that fine line of being warm but not sweating. During storms I am required to stay within the boundaries of station, so I

ran several short laps back and forth to cover the distance. There wasn't much of a view, but it was still nice to have the opportunity to get outside.

A fitness tracking app captured Beres' run data as he did laps around McMurdo Station.

What's your motivation for supporting Fred Hutch research via Obliteride?

Cancer is an awful disease. I recently lost my grandmother due to lymphoma, and I've seen other loved ones battle with it as well. Fred Hutch does important work, and I've followed along with the research over the past few years as my sister works in the Seattle scientific research community (first at the University of Washington, now at the Allen Institute). I was happy to join Obliteride to show my support.

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