

Press Release

Hospital Play Alleviates Anxiety and Negative Emotions in Children *Recommended for routine use in public hospitals*

HONG KONG, 23 November, 2014 – With sponsorship from Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, Playright has appointed the University of Hong Kong's School of Nursing to conduct two years of research on the effectiveness of hospital play in improving the conditions of hospitalized children aged 3-12. The key findings of the research were that children who received hospital play intervention reported less negative emotional behaviour and lower levels of anxiety.

The University of Hong Kong interviewed more than 304 children who were hospitalized for at least three consecutive days from November 2012 to October 2013. The children were divided into two groups of 3-7 years old and 8-12 years old. To examine the effects of the hospital play service, a portion of children from each group were engaged in various hospital play activities for 30-minute periods. The findings show that negative emotions like irritability, protesting, refusing to cooperate, crying and other conditions were greatly alleviated in comparison to those who received the usual level of care. In the group of 3-7 year-olds, negative emotions dropped 25%, while the group of 8-12 year-olds dropped 21% when compared to their normal age groups. The figures also showed the rate of anxiety dropped 42% and 15%, respectively.

“This research shows the hospital play service can easily and effectively relieve negative pressure and emotions in children caused by their illnesses and help them understand medical procedures,” said Dr. Li Ho-cheung, William, assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Nursing. He added that sick children often need additional support to face their pain and discomfort.

Making hospital play a routine service

“Playright is now providing its play service in five public hospitals in Hong Kong,” said Dr C. B. Chow, BBS, JP, chairman of Playright Children's Play Association. “In the near future, we recommend this service be extended to the upcoming Hong Kong Children's Hospital and all other public hospitals as a routine

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service. Play can be a form of therapy to release a child's negative emotions and allow them to easily understand medical procedures, thus relieving pressure and creating a positive attitude. Moreover, the hospital play service has been widely used in many hospitals as a routine service in the United States of America and England, where it has showed a high level of effectiveness”.

Dr Li Chi-kong, chairman of the Central Coordinating Committee in Paediatrics of the Hospital Authority, appreciates the love and care Playright has given sick children. He said it was worthwhile to encourage Playright for their efforts over the past two decades, adding that Playright has valuable experience that could be referenced to enhance children's wards. He hopes more specific recommendations could be gathered for children's hospitals and that additional research is explored in the future.

Case Sharing: Learning to reduce anxiety

Chan Sum-yuet is a 10-year-old girl who has suffered from end stage renal failure since 2012. She has undergone a number of treatments, including intravenous injections, daily peritoneal dialysis and a kidney transplant operation. Hospitalized for up to three weeks, she often felt upset and scared, which is why her mother praised the hospital play specialists. She said, “They use medical dolls and various play activities to explain medical procedures to Sum-yuet, ultimately reducing her fear so that she was able to accept her treatment”. She thanked Playright and the Disney VoluntEARS for their efforts in assisting her daughter during a difficult time.

Giving heart to children in need

After finishing the applicable training course, HKDL Cast Member Ruth Tse from the resort's Merchandise team regularly serves as a Disney VoluntEAR and assists the hospital play specialists. She said she is happy to help children feel better about their situations. “I'm glad I can use my skills and creativity to help children feel some relief”.

“Disney is a brand that brings joy to people around the world,” said Ms. Anita Lai, director of Corporate Citizenship at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort. “We emphasize ‘inspiring creativity’ and building a ‘caring community’. This aligns with Playright's concept of using play to make children feel happy”.

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Since the program began in 2012, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort has supported the training of 120 VoluntEARS in the required play-related course. The resort has also provided 500 hours of volunteer service in hospitals, benefiting more than 2,200 sick children. Ms Lai added, “We hope this research helps further promote the service for inclusion in the new Children's Hospital and makes it a normal service available in every hospital”.

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About Playright

Playright is a non-profit organization set up in 1987 that seeks to enrich the life of every child through quality play. We make a difference in the lives of children by encouraging them to play. We further seek to demonstrate to parents, teachers, policy makers and the public at large that quality play is vital if the full range of a child's developmental needs is to be successfully met. Through action, research and publicity covering four related areas: Advocacy, Play Resources, Play Outreach and Play Environments, we are helping to unlock the full potential of children in Hong Kong and elsewhere in Asia.

Playright believes every child has to play no matter if they are healthy or sick. When children are sick, they not only have to face the discomfort and pain from the illness, but also the stressful anxiety and the difficulty of undergoing medical procedures. In order to support the needs of hospitalized children, we have introduced a full range of volunteer hospital play services since 1994 in some of the paediatric wards of the public hospitals. Now we have extended the service to five public hospitals. The number of beneficiaries was 25,047 from 2013-2014.

About Hong Kong Disneyland

Hong Kong Disneyland offers immersive, unique Disney experiences for all families, generations and ages to enjoy. Hong Kong is one of only five locations in the world that is home to a Disney themed park and the many Disney characters that are beloved the world over, such as Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Stitch and Buzz Lightyear. Since the Grand Opening in September 2005, Hong Kong Disneyland has welcomed more than 46 million guests from around the globe. Through the unique product offerings and the world-class service provided by the 7,500-plus Cast at the theme park and the two hotels, Hong Kong Disneyland has received outstanding guest satisfaction ratings and a range of awards from the hospitality and entertainment sectors.

Hong Kong Disneyland is dedicated to serving Hong Kong people through a wide spectrum of community service programs from helping those in need to encouraging the protection of the environment in the region.

If you want to know more about us and want to enjoy a unique magical experience, visit us or click on www.hongkongdisneyland.com for more information.

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