

HOSPITAL PLAY NEWS

LIVE FROM THE SCENE

BEFORE AND AFTER 7 MONTHS OF TREATMENT

JUST FOR THE RECORD

OUR HOSPITAL PLAY SPECIALISTS



HAPPINESS EASILY FOUND IN A PLAYFUL WARD

"I want one more piece of cake." A child made his request again. The head nurse attended to his request by giving him another piece of cake. Together with other hospitalized children who had been assessed as to be able to eat cake, the child happily enjoyed the delicious cake.

50th BIRTHDAY OF THE COMMUNITY CHEST @ TSEUNG KWAN O HOSPITAL

The children were not gathering to celebrate anyone's birthday. In fact, they were celebrating the 50th birthday of the Community Chest, which enables sick children to enjoy a playful hospital ward. Since 2014, Playright has been sponsored by the Community Chest to provide a hospital play service at the Tseung Kwan O Hospital. Not only has the service won the heart of the children, but the hospital play specialists have also been recognized as members of the medical team. The 50th birthday of our supporter, who has made all this happen, is definitely worth celebrating.

REASON FOR PLAYFULNESS

Five years ago, hospital play specialists began to be stationed in the Paediatric ward of the hospital. At first, they served with caution for fear of being rejected. To their surprise, they were quickly accepted by the medical team. Thus, hospital play specialists soon held the first workshop to enable the medical team to understand more about the importance of hospital play, as well as the assessment methods and play solutions developed by them. Whether hospital play is successfully implemented and effectively helping sick children depends very much on the understanding and recognition of hospital play among doctors, nurses and other staff. Hence, the overwhelmingly positive response of the medical team greatly boosted the confidence of the hospital play specialists. Since the launch of hospital play, the medical team's care for the children has remained unchanged despite changes in personnel. In fact, their caring attitude is the key to creating a playful hospital ward.



The workshop on hospital play was well attended and supported by the medical team.

Hospital play specialists live a busy life at the Paediatric and Adolescent hospital ward. Apart from briefing newly admitted children on the procedures of a hospital admission, they invite the children to participate in different kinds of play appropriate to their age, needs, preferences and health conditions. They also help children to be physically, psychologically and intellectually prepared to receive medical treatment through demonstrations of such treatments on a self-made toy bear. In addition, doctors and nurses may refer children to the hospital play specialists for early intervention when the children need help in soothing their negative emotions toward medical treatment. When children are willing to co-operate with different kinds of treatment, such as blood-taking, echocardiogram, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) or plastering, the medical team gets very excited.



Everyone shows up to create a playful hospital ward.

A PLAYFUL ENVIRONMENT

As a playful environment is essential in creating a playful atmosphere, it is also one of the aims of the hospital play specialists to create a delightful and safe ward that suits the medical needs. To this end, they collect children's views and favourites in designing a theme of the ward. In the case of the Tseung Kwan O Hospital, the hospital play specialists came up with a theme of "animal world" for the ward. Hence, they decorated the ward walls with pictures of animals, including a giraffe maze, colour-changing insects and colourful balloons. In a decorated ward in this way, the children can still play just by counting the number of balloons and finding insects even if they are bound to stay in the ward.



The wall of the hospital ward covered with a maze.



Even if bed-ridden, you can still count the balloons.



Undergoing an echocardiography while enjoying a movie.



The pictures of carrots on the floor create a playful route for the ward.

The play elements were extended to outside of the ward. For example, the ceiling of the room for echocardiography became the screen for playing a "film". When the children managed to co-operate and stayed still without being sedated whilst undergoing an echocardiography, a playful ceremony was arranged for them afterwards. On the way from the ward to the treatment room, pictures of carrots had been pasted onto the floor for the children to count while going to the room. It is indeed a fun-filled route.



Riding a tricycle is one of the favourite activities in the ward.

Another amazing play facility is a tricycle which was prepared to address other needs of the hospitalized children. Seeing that children are afraid of going to the treatment room due to being in an unfamiliar environment and because of fear of leaving their family, the hospital play specialists used the tricycle to alleviate the children's fear. They would say to the child, "Look! There's a tricycle. Do you want to ride the tricycle or walk to the treatment room?" In an instant, the children would stop crying, ride the tricycle, and go to the treatment room in a relaxed manner.



A PLAYFUL BIRTHDAY PARTY

At the 50th birthday party of the Community Chest held by the hospital play specialists, the child patients and their parents, the medical team, social workers and volunteers gathered to have fun together. At a place prepared and appropriately furnished by the hospital with the help of the hospital staff, all child patients, whether they were fully mobile or not, enjoyed a great time eating delicious cakes, watching shows, participating in games and making handicraft.



The ward is turned into a party room.

NEVER FORGET TO CARE AMID A BUSY LIFE

Associate Consultant Dr Patrick Ng Hak-yung understands the psychological needs of sick children. He often twists balloons as gifts to children who undergo echocardiogram or treatment, thus creating a friendly atmosphere and winning their hearts. Though Dr Ng had informed us that he was unavailable to join the party, he still showed up amid his busy schedule. Before the party began, he came to twist many balloons, helped volunteers to decorate the place and returned to work afterwards. Despite his absence, his care for the children was still felt during the party.



Dr Ng is not only a renowned paediatrician but also a master of balloon twisting.

LOVE TO PLAY AND BEING PLAYFUL

Today's medical students will be tomorrow's doctors. Arranged by the head of the Paediatric Department, the medical students also joined the party and experienced hospital play. They were not only involved in the party, but they also performed magic. They even became enthusiastic promoters to brief parents on hospital play. For those children who had to stay in the infectious ward, the medical students showed their care by twisting balloons in the shapes of doggies and other popular shapes.



Medical students are not only good at studying - they can help boost the atmosphere at the birthday party.

REMARKABLE GUEST PERFORMER

The "remarkable guest performer" of the party was Siu Fei who showed the dance steps of K-pop girl groups! Seven-year-old Siu Fei, a boy of sunshine, had told the hospital play specialists that he fancied K-pop and was familiar with the dance steps. Hence, the hospital play specialists invited him to perform but he rejected. After repeated persuasion efforts, he finally accepted the invitation. Having been encouraged by the hospital play specialists and having practiced for a while, Siu Fei performed to his best and won rounds of applause from the audience. Knowing from research that when children are trusted and empowered to show their talents, their positive feelings are reinforced and their resistance against adversity increases, that's why the hospital play specialists invited Siu Fei to perform.



The rhythmic, expressive "Ward-Pop" idol.

AFTER THE PARTY.....

Birthday parties provide chances for a temporary getaway from the daily ward routine for everyone. At parties, doctors no longer check their patients with the stethoscope, the medical team no longer performs any medical procedures like taking blood or washing wounds. Instead, they sing, play, laugh, eat cakes and clap their hands. Without any masks on their faces, doctors and others from the medical team show their facial expressions and communicate in a more natural manner with patients. As a result, their communication with patients will increase and their bonding with patients will become stronger.



This playful ward helps Siu Mo (her back shown) to become more cheerful and willing to express her feelings.



Hospital play @ Tseung Kwan O Hospital

Period: From October 2014 till now

Sponsor: The Community Chest of Hong Kong

Amount of sponsorship: HK,\$3,951,094 / 5 years

Scope of service: Paediatric and Adolescent Ward,
Specialist Out-Patients Clinics
(Asthma, Dermatology)

Number of beneficiaries: 50,000 / 5 years

One of the hospitalized children, Siu Mo, had remained silent during her five months of hospitalization. Soon after joining the Community Chest birthday party, she was notified of the news of being discharged from the hospital. As the following day was also her birthday, the hospital play specialists immediately arranged a small-scale party for her in which a birthday cake and a card were prepared. At the party, the doctors and nurses surrounded Siu Mo, singing a birthday song and sending blessings to her. The shy Siu Mo was particularly touched by the sincere dialogues she had with the medical team. She thanked everyone and agreed to leave her contact details for follow ups by the hospital play specialists. The group photo taken at the end of the party is a record of a child successfully fighting diseases and enjoying her healthy growth, as well as a proof of love.



To conclude, birthday parties are an extension of hospital play, in which care for patients and love for children is shown. The spirit of birthday parties is also in compliance with the principle of the Charter for Children in Hospital.

Charter for Children in Hospital (excerpts)

- Children shall enjoy the care of appropriately trained staff who are fully aware of the physical and emotional needs of each age group.
- Children shall be in an environment that is furnished and equipped for their requirements. The setting for the care of children shall conform to recognized standards of safety and supervision.
- Children shall have the opportunity for play, recreation and education suited to their age and conditions.



Front row from left: Dr Patrick Ng Hak-yung (Associate Consultant), Ms Tammy Chui Ting-me (Hospital Play Supervisor), Ms Pony Kong Siu-ping (Manager, Hospital Play), Ms Miranda Lui Mei-wa (Ward Manager), Dr David Lau Chun-yuen (predecessor Chief of Service), Dr Louis Chan Tsz-wang (Chief of Service), Dr Tay Ming-kut (Associate Consultant), Dr Ku Wai-hung (Associate Consultant)

Before – play is needed in the middle of treatment.

After – physical play after rehabilitation.



LIVE FROM THE SCENE

BEFORE AND AFTER 7 MONTHS OF TREATMENT

It is worrying to see children get sick, even if the sickness is very short-lived. It is a serious trial when children get severely ill. The most torturous cases are those involving toddlers. Three-year-old Sai Shing is among one of them, who got a rare disease named Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. To Sai Shing himself and his family, every scene of fighting the disease was horrifying during his seven months' combat against the disease.

SUDDEN ATTACK OF THE DISEASE

On 13 January 2018, Sai Shing's mother found that her son's eyes lost focus, his whole body was feverish, and his limbs lost strength. She immediately took him to the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital. Sai Shing was first admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the Paediatric Department. After being hospitalized for 10 days, Sai Shing was diagnosed with Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. When his conditions had stabilized, he was transferred to the Paediatric and Adolescent Ward for continued treatment.

Affected by the disease and the medication, many parts of Sai Shing's body had to be connected to medical devices or receive injections. Hence, his mental condition was not good and he was always in a state of semi-coma or being sedated. As he often experienced seizures and found it hard to fall asleep, his mother got very worried. In order to let Sai Shing rest more, his mother sometimes declined the hospital play specialists' offer to help.

INFORMATION CENTRE

Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis

It is a form of encephalitis caused by autoimmune disorder in which antibodies attack NMDA. The disease can be lethal but is also curable. It is a rare disease and affects mostly children. The symptoms of the disease are severe and the diagnosis is difficult. It is diagnosed normally through a series of medical investigations including Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT) Scan, and lumbar puncture. The clinical symptoms include those similar to psychotic symptoms, consciousness disturbance, hypoventilation, seizure, Dysautonomia, Dyskinesias etc. The encephalitis is cured mainly by medication and complemented by rehabilitation training.

JINGLE JINGLE

In fact, the hospital play specialists understood that it was not suitable for Sai Shing to play given his health condition. However, they still kept in close connection with his mother and closely monitored his conditions. They regularly brought suitable sensory play whenever possible. They also discovered that even Sai Shing might look dispirited, his heart beat increased and his face showed reactions during play. With an observant attitude, hospital play specialists can observe such subtle changes that are not detectable by ordinary people.

After sharing their observations with Sai Shing's mother, the hospital play specialists got the mother's permission for Sai Shing to play. They designed suitable play which allowed Sai Shing to play while lying down. The play they brought included musical instruments and toys that produce sounds when being patted or touched. They had chosen sensory and audio play because it was interesting and conducive to Sai Shing's development. On the other hand, music had a soothing effect which helps to sooth emotions, thus making Sai Shing more co-operative when receiving medication through injection and receiving check-ups.

REHABILITATION AND PLAY

After having received care and treatment by the medical team for more than four months, Sai Shing's conditions improved. Though he had to be fed through tubes and lie in bed, his time of sleeping decreased obviously. In this regard, the medical team suggested to hospital play specialists to increase the playtime so as to add more fun time to Sai Shing's routine and to support the rehabilitation therapy.

Lying in bed for a long time typically cause muscle to shrink. It is even more harmful for the growth of muscles of toddlers. Hence, rehabilitation training was included in Sai Shing's fight against the disease. During the training, Sai Shing had to sit regularly on the rehabilitation chair to conduct muscle exercises. From time to time, his sitting postures were fixed by different stripes of cloth. It was inevitable that he sometimes felt uneasy and became tired during the process and that his emotions were affected.

Targeting the above therapy process, the hospital play specialists hoped to create a delightful experience through play. Play was arranged for Sai Shing including drawing pictures, playing with a doll and a train. As expected, Sai Shing liked the play very much. He was so immersed in the play every day that he finished the "impossible tasks" without even noticing anything



Musical play brings the best soothing effect for toddlers.

Sai Shing's mother got pregnant and gave birth to his younger brother in April. Since then, she had to take rest and look after the new-born. Hence, the grandmother took up the responsibility of accompanying Sai Shing. The grandmother came to visit Sai Shing in the morning, bringing along his favourite toy and placing it on his bedside. The hospital play specialist seized the opportunity to encourage the grandmother to play with Sai Shing. While the hospital play specialist was shaking the rattle and playing the wave drum to produce music, the grandmother held Sai Shing's little hand to clap to the beat and sing "la la la" together. Even though they did not sing well, their songs were filled with love. Their interaction was also very touching, with both of them wearing a lovely smile.

about the therapy. The longer time he sat on the rehabilitation chair, the greater the effect of the rehabilitation. Since then, Sai Shing no longer lost his temper, nor did he resist the rehabilitation training any more.



Thanks to the magical power of play, Sai Shing becomes very focused.



Being strapped in as part of rehabilitation is no bother during play.



Toddlers need play for their growth and sick toddlers are no exception.

GROWTH AND PLAY

For toddlers, cognitive development is also important apart from fighting diseases. Hospital play specialists care for the holistic development of sick children and are surely aware of that. For Sai Shing, the hospital play specialists prepared a play of transporting balloons to observe his understanding of language. Using bigger red balloons and smaller yellow balloons, Sai Shing was asked about his preference. Sai Shing raised his hand a bit to point to the red balloon to express his choice.



Play attracts Sai Shing to participate and express himself, which is conducive to his development.

Apart from daily consultation and treatment, the medical team also cared about how Sai Shing played. They not only asked about his play but also used it to observe his reactions and co-ordination in order to assess his rehabilitation progress. The young Sai Shing seemed to be aware of the expectations of the medical team, the medical specialists, his family and hospital play specialists and tried his best to recover from the illness. In June, Sai Shing could turn his body over and produce simple sounds.

Having witnessed the progress made by Sai Shing, the occupational therapist and the physiotherapist began to enhance the muscle training pertaining to the areas of eating, swallowing and muscle coordination. Within a few months' time, Sai Shing had made great progress from lying in bed all day to sitting and standing by himself. The improvement amazed and surprised everyone.

As Sai Shing had made good progress and his development began to synchronize with normal children of the same age, the hospital play specialists brought to him a popular play activity – bubble making, which let Sai Shing enjoy simple play as any other children would do.

THE PLAY DIARY

In order to let Sai Shing's family understand his ward activities and his rehabilitation process, the hospital play specialists especially made a growth diary. In the diary, Sai Shing's happy moments of playing, and his interaction with the occupational therapist were recorded. Sai Shing's mother was touched when receiving the simple but meaningful gift, saying that she could experience every moment of Sai Shing's rehabilitation even though she was not present. She could also witness the efforts Sai Shing had made and the care of the medical team.



The most precious diary of Sai Shing's fight against the disease and his growth.



Sai Shing is finally discharged from the hospital with a lifted spirit.

On 31 August 2018, Sai Shing was finally discharged from the hospital! The hospital play specialist who has kept in contact with Sai Shing's mother learnt that after half a year of rehabilitation, Sai Shing's physical conditions are not different from other children of the same age. The hospital play specialist met Sai Shing again at an outdoor activity organized by Playright, and discovered that Sai Shing was very active, running from one play zone to another. He was hugely different from the days when he got sick. No wonder his parents were so relaxed.



POSTSCRIPT

After Sai Shing had fully recovered, his mother shared her own thoughts with the hospital play specialists: during Sai Shing's hospitalization, his health condition initially did not improve much and he even fell into a coma. Hence, she wondered if he would recover at all and his family was depressed. However, from the conversations with the doctors and nurses, she learnt that the medical team insisted on taking care of Sai Shing, the occupational therapist and the physiotherapist spared no efforts to train Sai Shing; and the hospital play specialists also kept playing with him and brought to him much fun and joy. Those efforts contributed by everyone accumulated and they finally paid off - Sai Shing recovered and left the hospital. This was truly miraculous and reignited hope in her. She is very grateful to all of them.



Sai Shing, having recovered from his illness, plays happily with his younger sister at the invitation of hospital play specialists.



OUR HOSPITAL PLAY SPECIALISTS

Nicknames

Hospital play specialists often create cute and easy-to-remember nicknames for themselves for ease of communication with the children. Most of the nicknames originate from their Chinese names bearing repeated characters such as Sister Ka-ka, Sister Yan-yan, Sister Yue-yue, and Sister Si-si. Some nicknames come from their English names such as Sister Pony, Sister Carrot, and Sister Curry. Some hospital play specialists name themselves based on the ornaments they wear such as Sister Bear, Sister Strawberry. Some call themselves Sister Blueberry according to the “team of fruit” they have formed. A hospital play specialist named herself “Sister Rabbit” to build up a joyful first impression, while others have created their nicknames based on their habits and characteristics. For example, a hospital play specialist named herself “Sister Bread” because she likes bread and she makes fun of herself about having a round face.

Before joining the team.....

Before becoming a hospital play specialist with Playright, some colleagues engaged in education-related work, while others worked in the fields of social work or therapy. But the majority of them are fresh university graduates.

Reasons to serve

Playright's service target is predominantly children. 80% of all hospital play specialists choose to work with Playright because of the mission of serving children. They wish to offer help to children in need, particularly when they are sick. Some colleagues have joined the team owing to their relatives' experiences or their own experiences during childhood.



The hospital where most are working

Amongst the five public hospitals where a regular hospital play service is provided by Playright, the Princess Margaret Hospital is the one having the longest history of service. Hence, the hospital ranks the first in terms of the number of hospital play specialists having served in it. The Prince of Wales Hospital ranks second and the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital is in third place, with the Caritas Medical Centre and the Tseung Kwan O Hospital following respectively.



Happiest moments

Play brings joy to children. The happiest moment of hospital play specialists is when children wear a happy smile: they smile happily during play; they smile again when they recover from fatigue and anxiety; they smile in excitement during birthday parties; they smile confidently upon coping with fear of treatment; they smile satisfactorily when they are permitted to go outside during long-term hospitalization; they smile in a uplifted spirit when they are discharged from hospitals. To our hospital play specialists, these moments are the source of motivation.

Terms they have learnt

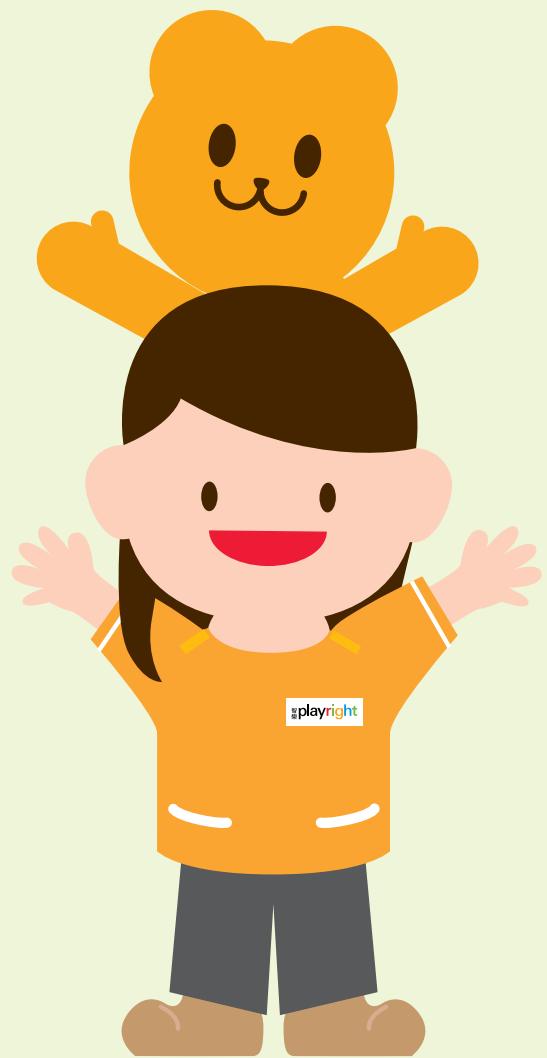
The work of hospital play specialists is closely related to the medical treatment of diseases and illnesses. Hence, they have learnt many medical terms such as Hereditary Epidermolysis Bullosa, Suspected Mucopolysaccharide-Glycosaminoglycan, Epiblepharon, or Lupus Erythematosus. Some hospital play specialists think that they have also learnt to “prioritize” tasks, to “manage time”, to “balance” and to be “bold”.

Discovery

Hospital play specialists often discover new strengths after joining the profession. Some find that they are not afraid of blood or saliva. They can accompany non-relatives to face chronic diseases or even death and they can encounter strangers or unfriendly people. They can also talk on many topics confidently, have unlimited patience, multi-task and be responsive to any situation. Moreover, they can be creative and possess art sense. Most importantly, they find that they love children very much and they love spending time with children.

Spokesperson

As toy bears trigger a warm feeling, many hospital play specialists chose it as their spokesperson. Another popular candidate is Doraemon because it carries a lot of “treasures” just like hospital play specialists do and it is related to the miraculous power brought by play.



Embarrassing moments

Hospital play specialists meet many children every day. The most embarrassing moment is when children greet them and they cannot respond at all. Another awkward moment is when they face an “identity crisis”. For example, they are mistakenly called “play therapist”, or “toy lady”. Sometimes, they are also mistaken as volunteers or even children’s parents. The predicament occurs when parents insist that their babies do not need any play, or when hospital play specialists tell parents that they can accompany their children to receive treatment but later are rejected by the hospital staff.



Most unexpected

Play is the mysterious kingdom of children and the power derived from play cannot be underestimated. Some children become acquainted with hospital play specialists through play to whom they even reveal their secrets. Some children still remember hospital play specialists many years after their recovery. Some have been so involved in play that they accidentally wet their bedsheets. Angered by this situation, their parents sometimes want to expel hospital play specialists.

Children’s “superpower” can be demonstrated through play. A child decorated the quarantine room with twisted balloons in the “shapes of fairies”. An 18-month-old baby did not wail and cooperated quietly when he underwent the removal of K-wires and cast. However, there was also an 18-year-old teenager who became quite nervous undergoing the same procedures.

Hospital play specialists can be surprised when they meet sick children of their friends. However, they are most unprepared when facing unavoidable deaths caused by chronic illnesses.



HEARTFELT GRATITUDE



- 1 Thanks to the donation of HK\$1,163,797 from the Community Chest of Hong Kong, we were able to launch versatile hospital play service at the Department of Paediatrics & Adolescent Medicine of Princess Margaret Hospital in 2018/19. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Community Chest for their regular donation since 2005, which has been enabling us to continually provide a holistic hospital play service at the Princess Margaret Hospital.
- 2 The Community Chest of Hong Kong continued its donation of HK\$1,598,559 under the Time Limited Project to support the operation of the 2-year hospital play service at the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine of Tseung Kwan O Hospital until March 2020.
- 3 The donation of HK\$809,710 from "Operation Santa Claus 2017" jointly organized by the South China Morning Post and Radio Television Hong Kong, supported us to continue operating the hospital play service at the Prince of Wales Hospital until March 2019.
- 4 Philanthropists Mr and Mrs Lawrence Ho generously donated HK\$1,788,000 to support us to continue with the "Hospital Play Service @Caritas Medical Centre" for more than two years until March 2020. The programme will benefit patients of the Department of Paediatrics & Adolescent Medicine & Developmental Disabilities Unit of the Caritas Medical Centre.
- 5 "The Transition Play Programme for Renal Child Patients" was rigorously supported by the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort. With their donation of HK\$800,000, we are able to continue to provide hospital play service to sick children with renal disease and their families until September 2019.

6 We specially thank Dr Yvonne Becher for her editorial guidance.

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