

The *V*ision

September 2006

A Children's Hospital for Hong Kong

A Children's Cancer Foundation Initiative



Welcome to our journey

...a convergence of world-class research, clinicians and technology that will change the face of health care for this and future generations

In 1989, the mother of a child with cancer, together with a group of dedicated doctors, nurses, parents and concerned individuals, sowed the seeds of the Children's Cancer Foundation.

They did so because they recognized that the children of Hong Kong were in desperate need of specialized care.

Since that time, the Foundation has focused all of its resources on the promise of enhancing the quality of life for young children and their families, helping doctors improve survival rates, and upgrading equipment and services in public hospitals.

Seventeen years later, our health care system has evolved, and together with our friends in the medical community and other charities that care for seriously ill children, we are embarking on the journey to build a Children's Hospital for Hong Kong, and our vision remains the same.

The proposed new facility comprises elements that will support our greater purpose - to provide all children in our community with access to the most advanced cures, treatments and technologies performed by the best minds in paediatric medicine and research in a child and family-centred environment.

Kids cannot vote. Kids cannot call politicians or meet with government officials on issues affecting their health and well-being. They need to partner with strong organisations, institutions and people to do this for them.

That is why, around the world, children's hospitals are significant partners with governments, medical schools and teaching hospitals in providing complex care exclusively for children. But the most important partners in the care of hospitalised children are family members and health professionals.

This proposed state-of-the-art facility will be designed with all these partnerships in mind. It will accommodate the needs of patients and their families and equip patient care teams with the best technology available. The new design will be focused on providing patients and families with more comfortable accommodation and allow more space for advanced diagnostic and treatment equipment at the bedside.

With the building of the hospital, we will witness a convergence of world-class research, clinicians and technology that will change the face of health care for this and future generations. Surely there is no greater dream for our city, for our children, or for our future.

We hope you enjoy reading about our journey in the coming months, and that you will join us along the way. ■





Realising the full potential of Hong Kong's paediatric care

The Vision talks with Professor Fok Tai-fai

When asked to comment on the standard of paediatric medical services in Hong Kong, Professor Fok Tai-fai, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong quoted Hong Kong's infant mortality rate (IMR). He said that our IMR was as low as 2 per 1,000 - one of the lowest in the world.

Professor Fok supports the idea of establishing a children's hospital in principle. "A specialist children's hospital would consolidate all related expertise, medical equipment and resources together in one place, thereby facilitating the exchange of views among experts and the treatment of complex cases. These in turn will contribute to the development of the profession."

Regarding services offered to young patients, Professor Fok said that a children's hospital would not just provide better medical teams, but also the development of related expertise, such as paediatric pathology, radiology, physiotherapy and psychological services. At present, there is no hospital in Hong Kong that can offer paediatric specialists in every field, and specialists need to take care of a wide range of patients. But children's needs are different from adult patients.

As to the argument that Hong Kong's low birth rate does not justify the establishment of a children's hospital, Professor Fok believes that a low birth rate does not necessarily imply less need or a low utilization rate. "It's time we looked at providing quality services for the future pillars of the community. In addition, there are a lot of young immigrants from the Mainland whom we need to take care of as well."

When asked about the appropriate design for a children's hospital for Hong Kong, Professor Fok's immediate comment was that the traditional white wards should go, and designated play areas for children should be included. A home-feel hospital environment is essential, especially for those who require hospitalisation for long periods of time.

Wearing a tie with the cartoon character Winnie the Pooh, Professor Fok's outfit clearly demonstrates that he is a committed paediatrician. In fact he has been engaged in this specialty for more than 30 years. He believes that paediatrics presents challenges that are different because paediatricians need to take care of a wide range of special developmental needs - from newborns to adolescents. He concluded, "The basic requirement for being a good paediatrician is

that you have to love children. What better way to demonstrate that a society values and loves children than to build a dedicated hospital for them." ■

Vision Facts

THE 4 "D'S" OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE

DEPENDENCY – Children are dependent on others, most often their parents.

DEVELOPMENT – Children and their health care issues change rapidly with time because childhood is a period of rapid growth and development.

DISADVANTAGE – Children are disproportionately poor, in a minority, and unable to speak for themselves.

DIFFERENT EPIDEMIOLOGY – Children are generally healthier, but when sick, tend to have a wider array of rare conditions than do adults.

A mother's wish

Mrs Leung was shocked on learning that her newborn boy had Down syndrome. Most of his life has been spent in Princess Margaret Hospital, where he was born.

Now six months old, Matthew suffers with congenital septal defect, creating breathing and eating difficulties. When he was four months old, he underwent a major operation in Grantham Hospital. Now, Matthew's treatment is based on advice of the medical teams from both hospitals, which requires time to develop coordinated treatment options. Mrs Leung would expect a children's hospital to offer a faster, one-stop service. She also expects a children hospital

to provide more professional service to patients who require intensive care.

Mrs Leung believes a children's hospital should be decorated with pastel colours and cartoon characters, and that colourful images will provide stimulation to child patients and help take care of their psychological well-being.

Mrs Leung recalls seeing a 12-year-old boy sitting in a wheel chair for a whole day in intensive care - television was his only source of entertainment. She felt very sorry for him but there was nothing she could do. A spacious children's hospital with designated play areas could help cheer him up. ■





A children's hospital

More than a venue for medical treatment

Mr Christopher So, Director of the Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association, believes that a specially-designed children's hospital will help young patients' recovery, especially those requiring long periods of hospitalisation.

On average, about 40% of babies born with Down syndrome suffer from complications such as congenital heart disease, while another 15-25% might have gastrointestinal anomalies. In the first two years after their birth, they may need to undergo a number of surgical procedures, followed by a lengthy period of follow-up medical treatment.

Over the years Mr So has helped develop the

Association into a centre offering a wide variety of services for families with children suffering from Down syndrome. At present, the Association has about 650 families which have a member with Down syndrome and another 200 families of people with other disabilities. One of the services offered to parents is counselling related to their child's medical needs.

Ms Fancy Choi is a staff social worker of the Association working closely with parents of children with Down syndrome.

She believes that a children's hospital should offer a 'one-stop' comprehensive service for patients and their families, instead of just being restricted to medical treatment, as is currently

the case with public hospitals. She adds that children with Down syndrome have problems in learning, and it would be good to be able to offer them some sort of training or stimulation during their hospitalisation. This would be most helpful for their long-term development.

On the physical setting of a children's hospital, Mr So mentions some general hospitals he has seen in Canada as good examples of how a specially-designed and decorated hospital helps to relieve much of the mental stress experienced by young patients. He also echoed the belief of his front line staff workers - that a children's hospital should offer more than just medical treatment. ■

Yik-shu's battle for life



alone in this battle," said Yik-shu. She also appreciated the staffing system at the centre, and hoped the same system could be kept in a new children's hospital. "I'd like to meet the same nurses and doctors during my stay - this would make me feel secure and less away from home."

Support from family and friends is very important too. Yik Shu suggests a children's hospital should let parents stay overnight, especially during chemotherapy when patients are too weak to take care of themselves. She also suggested the use of pastel colours in wards and covering up the medical equipment. Even the exterior should be changed.

"I don't like the Cyber look of most new buildings now, the glass walls are too scary for children. A children's hospital should look like a Cinderella's Castle, where you could find fairies, nice dwarfs, and lovely plants all over the place." ■

Chan Yik-shu's battle against bone cancer began three years ago when she was 17.

Looking back at her nine months at Lady Pao Children's Cancer Centre at Prince of Wales Hospital, it was really tough for a young girl to stay in hospital for such a long period of time, but she has some good memories and was most grateful for the encouragement of the medical staff.

"I was impressed by the doctors and nurses there. They took very good care of me and encouraged me all the time. I knew I was not

What should a Children's Hospital for Hong Kong be called?

We invite you to send us your ideas on a suitable name for a children's hospital in Hong Kong.

Providing specialist care for infants, children and adolescents from birth to 19 years old, the proposed hospital could be named after a person, a place, or a fun idea. Children and parents want it to be a place of happiness and healing.

What do you think? Let us know your ideas, and we'll print some of the best in future editions of this newsletter and on our website - www.hkchildren.org.

Mission Facts

WORLD CITY RANKINGS

Today, Hong Kong is the only city among 20 generally recognised "world cities" that does not possess a dedicated children's hospital. Beijing and Shanghai each have two, Guangzhou has one.

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