

# Hospital Play News

## How PLAY can help to reduce the **Weight** from your body and your heart??

### A universal problem

Obesity is becoming a more and more serious problem in the world. According to the World Health Organization, at least 2.8 million people die every year as a result of being overweight or obese. Moreover, overweight or obesity will also increase the risk of having coronary heart disease, ischemic stroke, type 2 diabetes and some common cancers.

### Childhood obesity in Hong Kong should not be overlooked

Childhood obesity in Hong Kong is becoming more serious, too. There are reports saying that the percentage of Primary 1 obese students has risen from 11.3% in 1996/97 to 15.3% in 2010/11. Most recent findings show that 20% of the primary school students are overweight or obese. All these reflect the severity of the problem. Not only schools and parents are worried but the government is also concerned about this issue.

Childhood obesity is mainly caused by poor eating habits and the lack of exercise. If there is no early detection and improvement, most of the obese children are likely to stay obese in adulthood and face physical, mental and social problems brought by obesity. For physical health, an obese child will have a 60% chance of being obese in adulthood. If children remain obese, the risk for them to have severe illness will also increase. For mental health, since it is easy for obese children to be teased or rejected by their fellows, they may lack confidence and have a negative self-image. In addition, they usually have poor exercise tolerance and may be clumsy and slow, which affects their social life. In the long term, this may even result in problems or diseases like emotional instability, depression and eating disorder. Therefore, child obesity is now one of our public health concerns.





### Play to ease the problem

According to the sharing of healthcare staff, since children are still developing, they are not suited to lose weight by using extreme methods unless they are severely obese. They should improve their unhealthy eating habits and do more exercise in the short term. Their long-term goal should be having a healthy life style. To tackle this problem, the help from different teams of specialists is very important apart from the help from families and schools.

In the past few years, our Hospital Play Specialists have been cooperating with the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine of the Caritas Medical Centre to organize some weight loss programmes during the summer holidays. At the beginning, "PLAY" occupied only a small part in the activity. However, most parts are now conducted through play. From a "dessert" to a "main course", we are glad to see that all teams realized the importance of play to young patients and obese children, and are willing to pay more effort to help them. Doctors in the out-patient clinic first help to identify some high-risk children and encourage them to join the health camp. Then, different specialists including doctors, nurses,

physiotherapists, dietitians and Hospital Play Specialists cooperate together to provide opportunities for the participants to experience a healthy life style during the one- or two-week hospitalization. The results have been satisfactory. Not only did the BMI drop, but all the participants agreed that the health camp was useful for them and that they enjoyed themselves! The camp this year was even nominated to participate in the "Quality and Safety Project Competition" held by the Caritas Medical Centre. In addition to gaining the merit award in the poster exhibition, we also were nominated as the champion in the oral presentation competition! It is really encouraging to have the recognition from different parties that play can be a significant help to obese children!



## Gain by losing

Being part of the team, Hospital Play Specialists understand the seriousness of childhood obesity as well as the feelings of obese children. Most of the children know about their problem and hope to alleviate it. However, it is easier said than done. The lack of motivation and action will worsen the problem. Therefore, Hospital Play Specialists hope the children can feel more easiness, self-dependence and happiness through play. This positive experience will motivate them to practice a healthy life style without any negative feeling like being suppressed or controlled, or bored.

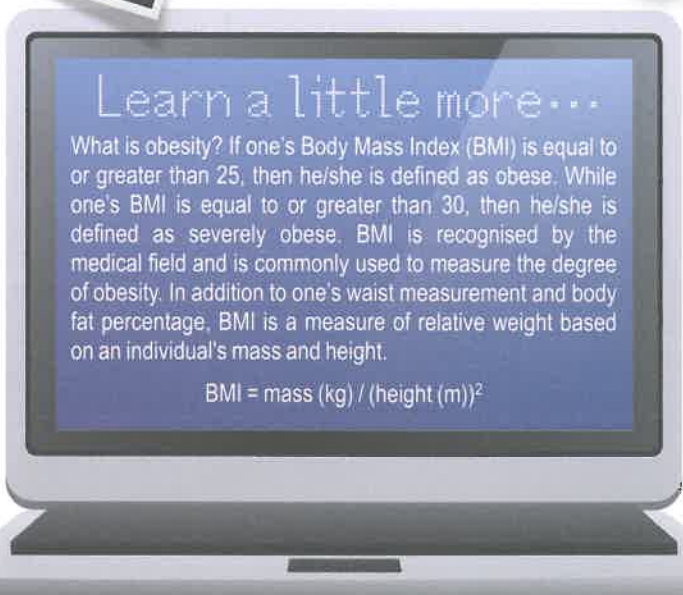
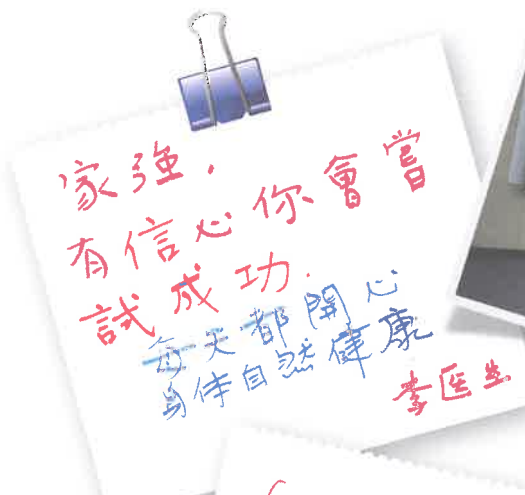
Through play, Hospital Play Specialists link different teams together. For example, they worked with dietitians to introduce some healthy food to the participants, and then they went groceries shopping with the children and cooked with them. The process was easy and the children could make decisions by themselves so they would not feel like being controlled. Another example was that we cooperated with physiotherapists to encourage the children to do more exercise by playing. Their interest and motivation increased when they heard "Play" rather than "exercise". We also asked some youth volunteers and nursing students to join our activities, to become the companions of the children as we believe this can encourage and motivate the children more.

Hospital Play Specialists also believe that outdoor play is essential. Therefore, we designed some one day programmes at different venues and the purpose is only for fun. For example, on a beach we would let them run and play freely, or in a campsite we would let them play their favorite ball games, go climbing or even join some adventure-based activities.

Although the obese children ran clumsily, they still spared no effort to play. Their dazzling smiles cheered us and also prove that play can help them to lose weight and ease their pressure as well.

## Pony Kong

Assistant Manager (Hospital Play Service)





Words from  
Hospital Play  
Specialist

## BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS, THERE IS A DIFFERENT MEANING...



As the weather gets warm, many parents will take their children to outdoor areas to feel the breath of spring. In Hong Kong, a city with convenient transportation, parents taking their children out in general is not difficult. But for a group of parents who have a child with a chronic illness, each outing is like a long march. Before going out, they need to make an appointment for rehabilitation transport. Apart from a lot of basic supplies for the children, they also need to prepare for special needs, emergency drugs, medical equipment, etc... Besides, they need to make some psychological preparation for themselves, too. It is because their children's appearance or physical condition might lead to strangers' curious attention. Due to all sorts of environmental and psychological barriers, some parents seldom take their children out. They just only take a walk in malls and parks which are close to their home. After understanding the needs of these parents and their children, I hoped to arrange different types of outdoor activities for them to have more opportunities to go out of the hospital and home areas, to have more contact with the community and to have different outdoor experiences.

This spring, I made some special arrangements for child patients and their families from the Neurology ward to visit the annual Flower Show. They enjoyed this event together with other Hong Kong people. Through the color and scent of flowers, these children got different sensory stimulations. This activity also allowed opportunities for different parent-child interactions as well as for the parents to share with each other.

To make the activity a long-lasting memory, I invited a professional photographer as a volunteer to accompany us to capture precious moments for the families. Their smile and warm parent-child interaction really complimented the colourful flowers around them. Reviewing these beautiful photos confirmed to everyone that child patients need different outdoor experiences. Looking at one of the photos in which a child was touching flowers to explore them curiously, his mother shared that it was the first time this child had such a close contact with flowers. His mother said: "Before this, I would not let him touch anything in the park, only let him take a walk. Although he seems to be unable to express himself through words, he is curious about flowers. That's really good!" Along the way, this mother also asked us to take some family photos. Because she took care of two children on her own, it was difficult to get a chance for her to take photos of the family.

I specifically took many photos for participating families with their loved ones for them to keep as I knew it was only one of their very few family activities. One of the mother shared that she was afraid to take her son out, because she minded how other people looking at them. She also would not allow her son to go out along with his sister, because she does not want her other child to feel discriminated against or to feel uncomfortable when other people were looking at them. This mother is only willing to attend activities for children with similar illnesses like her son. She believes these activities are suitable for him and will not cause embarrassment to him. During the activity, she also shared her feelings with other parents of similar patients. This makes her feel not alone. Generally, we believe child patients need peer support, in fact, there is a greater need for their parents to have peer psychological support to have a platform to share and express their pressures from taking care of their children. Like this flower show activity, parents can talk, share and exchange greetings with each other. It also allows them to participate in public events together and to feel part of the society. This kind of public activity takes them into the community they live.

I believe these photos are a good gift to the families to keep as a good memory. I hope these photos will encourage parents to take their children to be in contact with the society more often, making their lives more colourful.

**Karen Lau**  
Senior Hospital Play Specialist





# Happy Bear Hospital 2014



The fifth large-scale fund-raising activity "Happy Bear Hospital" organized by Playright was successfully held on 23 March 2014. The much appreciated participation of the Hospital Authority Chairman, Professor John Leong, in person was recognition to our hospital play service which was encouraging. Big thanks also to the assistance and support from various health care sectors and medical groups. We were very pleased to have support from Kieh's, this year's title sponsor, and the Leisure & Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to stage the event in the beautiful green environment of Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park, Western District, on Hong Kong Island. More than 2,000 participants joined this annual happy event!

This year, an addition to the popular "Bear Specialist Hospital", where children could bring along their favorite toys to experience medical investigation and treatment in different specialties, including "Cardiology", "Ophthalmology", "Orthopaedics", "Respirology", and "Neurology", was the "Training Centre", allowing children to act as hospital staff in scenarios of "Nephrology", "Oncology", "Haematology" and "Operating Theatre" to take care of their favorite toy patients by performing diagnosis and treatment. This was a valuable learning and fun experience.

In order to enable children to learn more hospital departments, this year we further added interactive "Pathology", "Dietetics and Catering Department" and "Pharmacy". Seeing those little attentive pathologists, taking a closer look under the simulated microscope, happy little chefs to show their talents in the kitchen and attentive children pharmacists' carefully allocating colourful simulated medicine and pills, was an exciting scene to witness!

Finally, Playright would like to cordially thank everyone who supported all sectors, including the health care sector as a service partner, the sponsorships from business and different organizations, as well as donors and charitable donations from participating families. We are very grateful for all your help. With you, we have more resources and confidence to put our continuous efforts toward the physical and mental well-being of child patients

## Pony Kong

Assistant Manager (Hospital Play Service)



# “Hopewell-Playright Chinese New Year Playday” To Celebrate Chinese New Year with Young Patients through Play



Being sponsored by Hopewell Holdings Limited (“Hopewell”), around 100 young patients with chronic illness, Youth Ambassadors, and their families joined the “Hopewell-Playright Chinese New Year Playday” at the Panda Hotel on Sunday, 26 January 2014. The rundown of the activity was rich. There were festival related play zones including Mandarin Tree Making, Wishing Tree Village and Lion Dance that were specially designed for the participants. There was also the performance of a clown. The atmosphere was festive and jolly. Moreover, the young patients and their families enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch under the sponsorship of Hopewell and the Panda Hotel. The gathering enhanced patient families’ support network as well as provided an appropriate playtime for the young patients.



Besides the support from Hopewell, Hospital Play Youth Ambassadors contributed a lot to this successful Playday. They were once young patients and also the beneficiaries of the Hospital Play Service. They had experienced the importance of play and thus are willing to assist Hospital Play Specialists in promoting play on different occasions. In turn, they enjoyed different play opportunities together with other young patients. Two of the Youth Ambassadors, Ka Kwan and Xavior, even hosted the event with the volunteers from Hopewell. Everyone was touched by their courage, especially their families – children grew a lot during the process of “play”!

We would like to express our gratitude again to Hopewell for their support in holding the Playday for three consecutive years. We are looking forward to see you all again in the next Playday!

**Iris Wong**  
Senior Hospital Play Specialist



## Thanks to the enthusiastic support from all walks of life

Playright would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the following organizations for their donations and supports between December 2013 and March 2014:

- The Community Chest of Hong Kong continues to support the "Hospital Play Service at Princess Margaret Hospital" from April 2014 to March 2015.
- In January 2014, Wing On Travel donated HK\$25,000 in support of our services. Other than the donations, their employees performed shows on the Playright Channel in April 2014 for hospitalized children.
- Kiehl's Since 1851 donated HK\$300,000 to sponsor our mass fund raising event “Happy Bear Hospital 2014” held on 23 March. It made more people know and support Playright's hospital play service.
- With the sponsorship of HK\$35,900 from the Marden Foundation, Playright will be able to send Hospital Play Specialists to Australia in May 2014 to visit children's hospitals and local hospital play service.
- Our special thanks goes to Dr. Yvonne Becher for her editorial guidance.



The "Hospital Play Service at Princess Margaret Hospital" is supported by The Community Chest of Hong Kong.

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