

# Our Lois – Star PALS's first 'graduate'!

By Ms Stella Kew

*In this article, Ms Stella Kew writes about her experience with the Star PALS team of HCA Hospice Care in looking after her daughter. Ms Kew's daughter was recently judged well enough to be discharged from the Star PALS paediatric palliative care service – the programme's very first 'graduate'.*

No one should ever believe that palliative care means a dead end for their child; if anything, palliative care should be looked upon as being "a helping hand, a guiding light, and a ready friend".

Our little girl, Lois, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy when she was born. Because of her delayed development, she needed a nasogastric (NG) tube for feeding, and often fell ill.

That NG tube especially was a huge obstacle for us. We took Lois home when she was three months old, but found it almost impossible to insert the tube. Would you believe that I used to bring Lois all the way to the National University Hospital from our home in the east, just to have the tube inserted?

I didn't have any choice at that time, because I was afraid of hurting her. The many warnings about what could go wrong made the task so much more stressful.

Then, in December 2012, a host of angels stepped into our lives: Dr Chong Poh Heng, Nurse Lily Li Kejia, Nurse Alice Heng, and later, Nurse Serene Wong and the rest of the Star PALS team. It was so reassuring to know that I could call on them whenever I had any difficulty, and receive guidance and help right away.

The team increased my family's confidence and ability to handle Lois on our own by sharing their knowledge and expertise with us. Dr Chong was the realistic one who kept us informed on what we should expect because of Lois's condition, while the nurses were a great source of positivity who would always keep our spirits up and our hopes going.

They didn't just draw the line at caring for Lois, but also took good care of our whole family. They would shower attention on Angel, Lois's older sister, during their visits. When they noticed we were especially tired, they would automatically arrange sessions with the Medi Minders, who would look after our children so that we could take a much needed break.

The Star PALS team has rejoiced with us during all our joyful moments and shared our triumphs in caring for Lois: seeing her get weaned off the NG tube and begin eating on her own. They were there to watch our mischievous daughter learn to pull Angel's hair, babble, walk, and now, become Star PALS's very first 'graduate'.

Now that Lois is officially discharged from the Star PALS programme, we look forward to her next milestone. We hope she'll be able to speak soon, with help from the early intervention programme at the Cerebral Palsy Alliance School.

Not surprisingly, I've become a great advocate for palliative care and Star PALS. Whenever I meet other parents in a similar situation, I'd immediately start asking, "Have you heard of this service? Have you considered getting help from them?"

That's how much their services have helped our family. ❤️

## About Star PALS

Star PALS, started in 2012 as an initiative of HCA Hospice Care, is a paediatrics palliative care service that provides holistic home care for young patients aged 19 years and below, and extends support to their families. Multidisciplinary care is provided by doctors, nurses, medical social workers, counsellors and allied health specialists like art therapists. Star PALS also actively engages the help of trained respite caregivers, known as Medi-Minders. Find out more about our paediatric palliative care services on [www.starpals.sg](http://www.starpals.sg).



*Lois (right) and her sister Angel (middle) looking through a scrapbook made by Nurse Serene (left).*



*Our family, and the wonderful Star PALS team!*



*My happy family (with two very distracted daughters!)*



*Our totally lovable Lois and her best mate – Dr Chong, Programme Director of Star PALS.*