

Paediatric Palliative Care – Not just about the children



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“A happy family is but an earlier heaven” - George Bernard Shaw.

A child's well-being is bound so tightly to his or her family that it's vital for paediatric palliative care to extend its reach to the parents and siblings as well.

While cancer patients form the majority of HCA's adult patients (84% last year), the proportion of such victims is much smaller among the Hospice's child patients. Most of our Star PALS children are instead afflicted by other disorders ranging from cerebral palsy to rare genetic conditions – many of them manifest since birth. As such, these children may be non-verbal or non-mobile, and are often totally dependent on their family.

Like every other aspect of a child's upbringing, care needs to be holistic. The comfort, which a sick child derives from the time and attention family members devote to him or her, could be compromised by the strain which the caregivers struggle under. That's why paediatric palliative care actively extends support to these children's loved ones, taking a multidisciplinary approach including medical care, therapy, counselling, and financial assistance where necessary.



Our recent Star PALS Family Day saw the families having a blast at our overnight camp at Sentosa.

Facilitating Quality Family Time

While providing palliative care to a sick child, the siblings should never be side-lined. Not only do they have to cope with seeing their brother or sister suffer, some might also need to help out in caregiving. They'll also inevitably get less attention from their parents. This is a difficult situation for not only siblings but also parents who constantly juggle the needs of all their children.

To help out, Star PALS organises family events like **Family Day Camp** at Sentosa. Held on 24-25 October this year, the overnight camp let families enjoy a worry-free day together, away from home. Participants enjoyed activities like the luge and touring the amazing SEA Aquarium together, while our nurses and Medi Minders stood by to take care of the children.

Providing Respite Care

Studies show significant drops in caregivers' levels of stress and depression after they have had some respite care. Our team of trained respite care volunteers, the Medi Minders, take care of children for blocks of time so parents can take time off to run errands, relax and recharge, or spend some time with their other children.

Extending Bereavement Support

The loss of a child is especially difficult to handle. Our nurses and social workers continue to offer support even after the child has passed on. In addition, Star PALS organises events like **Memorial Night** which we held on 31 August. This is a platform for parents to gather to celebrate and remember the lives of their children who have passed away. ❤️



We care for caregivers too. Memorial Night was a poignant affair celebrating the lives of our Star PALS children who'd moved on.

About Star PALS

Star PALS, an initiative of HCA Hospice Care, is a paediatric 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.star pals.sg.