

SAMIKSHA FOUNDATION- CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

QUARTERLY REPORT

June 2009 to Sept 2009

Report of our activities and observations at the Kapoor Ward of the Kidwai Memorial
Institute of Oncology, Bangalore, India

www.samikshafoundation.com

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We are currently at Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology at the Kapoor Ward- (Pediatric
Oncology Ward), on weekday afternoons..

Aug 24th 2009

First Report 2009: June 2009 to Sept. 2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

- 1.1 To record our activities
- 1.2 To understand the learning requirements of the children better and try to address the concerns about learning and school while they are in treatment.
- 1.3 To understand the patterns emerging from the course of the activities with respect to children's attitude, their happiness levels and self expression
- 1.4 To improve the quality of the ongoing work
- 1.5 To share this information with the hospital staff and authorities for the greater benefit of the patients
- 1.6 To understand what things we as parents, teachers and doctors can do to make sure the child's school needs are met when undergoing cancer treatment.

2.0 THE FACILITIES:

PROVIDED BY SAMIKSHA FOUNDATION AT THE KAPOOR WARD FOR THE CHILDREN:

- A Library of books : About 350 new storybooks were purchased for the library and set up in a little cupboard in the social welfare officer's room. Additional books are brought in regularly to add to this library.
- Puzzles and Activity models. About 10 Challenging jigsaw puzzles and activity models such as the Kaleidoscope math model and Tangram sets have been provided for the library.
- School kits for each child. A school kit consisting of 2 notebooks, a pencil, an eraser, sharpener, a drawing book, colour pencil set, crayon set, water colour paints with a brush – all in an eco friendly bag with their names on it, were distributed at the start of the program. Older children of 5th grade upwards were also given a compass box. To date a total of 105 kits have been distributed to the inpatient children and children in the Dharamsala.
- 20 Sitting mats with good cushioning for Yoga and classes
- School text books in all subjects have been provided for children from 4th to 10th grade. These are in Kannada and English medium as required.

3.0 PROGRAMS:

We have been there every Tuesday and Thursday of June, July and August, starting 18th June 2009. A typical afternoon covers breathing exercises and centering, story time, studytime (the group is divided into several smaller groups according to the age of the children), special math time or puzzle time and art time. One afternoon is dedicated to Yoga for 45 minutes before other activities.

The actual programs we have been conducting at the Kapoor Ward are listed below.

3.1. Trunk of Books:

Objectives: setting small goals and letting them make good use of their free time.

We bring books to the children in the wards. These are rotated once a week. The children are encouraged to write reviews of the books they have read.

Every week we review the book reports and discuss the details with them. This helps them keep up to date with their reading and also set targets for them to work on a timely basis. Our mentors have a scoring system to record the reading activity of the children, and appropriate rewards are given to readers.

The books and material for this are directly issued to the children, and they are in charge of these books in their wards areas.

OBSERVATIONS:

- The reading level of the children is vastly different. Those who read in English are very keen to take books and read them.
- The older children perform better with this task.
- Younger children prefer books with lots of pictures
- Some of the parents of younger kids are enthusiastic about taking books to read for the children and for themselves.
- 3 of the children have learnt the methodology of Report writing for books and are very happy with this knowledge. They are going in for more and more challenging books to read and write reports on.

Days of week when this is conducted: Tuesday and Thursday afternoon

3.2 I Am A Star

All children are special. In this program, we have collected some data on what each one likes. and fulfil some of their wishes to make them feel even more special.

Birthdays at the ward:

Objective: Making the children feel good about themselves.

Once a month a common birthday party for all children/caregivers whose birthdays fall in that month are arranged at the premises as a celebration. We organise some entertainment, fruit, a cake (if permitted), games and live music if possible. This could be planned in the outdoor areas or any area of the campus suggested by the authorities. This is done entirely on approval of the Director and HOD at the ward.

Preferred day of the week: A Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning

The next party is being organised on Sunday, the 6th sept at the ward at 11.00am to 1.00pm

3.3. The Education Program for inpatients:

Objective: To bring the children up to speed with their education, and make up for their loss of school time, when they are in the hospital.

Steps:

3.3.1. We have set up a full-fledged library- in the common area in the ward itself.

This helps all children in the ward itself to use the facility as and when they want to, without having to step out of the building. There are about 300 age appropriate books and about 50 types of play material. All books are laminated or plastic covered for ease of cleaning and maintenance. All books are regularly cleaned and wiped down by us. The requirement will be reviewed every 3 months.

3.3.2. We are encouraging kids to set up a gallery to display all the artwork and other outputs created by them. This has not yet happened here yet. This is possible with a little more involvement from the staff and parents in the ward.

3.3.3. To start with, our librarian mentor is present twice a week, (every Tuesday and Thursday), in the afternoons between 2.30 and 5.00 pm. The mentor is specialised in activities for children, and is a qualified librarian. She conducts activities, learning modules as appropriate on these days and maintains records of the activities and the children's involvement and requirements.

To help the mentor and to maintain a minimum adult to child ratio (1: 6) volunteers are present during these days. On an average, at least 4 of us are there at any such days. All are qualified professionals in various fields.

3.3.4. **Special tutoring for 6th, 7th, 8th,9th and 10th grade children:**

We have identified in this period, June to August, about eight children in this age group and category. Samiksha Foundation has arranged for the textbooks and special school material for these children, and we are trying to getting them more age appropriate and challenging material, so they don't get bored. We have also got tutors for older children on some days, so they can come up to speed with their school work and curriculum.

The children who have benefited from this program and have been discharged and gone back happily to school are:

Lavanya D.S,(6th std) Naveen K,(8th std),Channamma (5th std),Thanuja (7th std) Sanjay (6th std), Chetan C.B,(6th std) and R.Mahesh Kumar (7th std)

The children who are currently getting this special tutoring at the ward are:

Sanjay,(5th std),S.Archana (6th std),Gagan (8th std),Arihant.C(8th std),Chetan (7th std), Deepti.G,(10th std), Roopa (9th std).

3.3.5. We have two senior citizen volunteers on the same days, at the same time to the wards to address the needs of the mothers and caregivers staying in the wards. This gives them time away from the children for a little bit, and time to breathe easy while the kids are busy. This also helps them get some opportunity to talk and ventilate.

4. YOGA Program for kids and mothers in the ward:

This program is being conducted by our Yoga Teacher and Consultant, Swami Yogaratna Saraswati, every Monday between 2.30 and 3.15pm, prior to the schooling program.

Swamiji has developed a beautiful and practical curriculum for the children of various age groups and the program is very popular with the children. The Yoga Meditation sessions include simple asanas to keep the body fit and healthy without stressing it; pranayama (energy breathing) practices to enhance and balance the energies and exercise the lungs; Yoga Nidra meditations to relax and focus the minds and develop imagination. This is all done in a fun & fantasy way so that the children enjoy, laugh, play and gain a positive experience, giving relief from their health condition and developing all their mental, physical and emotional capacities. Singing & chanting, and drawing, are also done which encourages release of stress and development of positive energies and connects the children with their Inner Self.

We have arranged for 20 heavy duty Yoga mats which are used even for our study time.

Currently, the other volunteer group-Youth For Seva, were very keen on participating too in the yoga program, and so we have moved this to Mondays in order to coordinate with them.

Benefits: The benefits of Yoga, Breathing and self healing techniques are well researched. It is also gaining popularity in many hospitals in the world, following tremendous benefit to the affected children and their families.

OBSERVATIONS ON CHILDREN'S ABILITIES AND REACTIONS:

- Children are excited about this learning program. They tend to hang on to every word that is said to them and want to participate actively when not tired. Even when they have had a procedure or IT, they insist on coming in for a short while and just sitting there and observing the happenings.
- They have a very keen desire to learn and remember information that is given to them during the classes. This is evident in our storytime recall sessions.
- **The ability to understand Math concepts is very superior in most children.**
- The willingness to learn English and communicate is also fairly high. Even the fairly timid children who communicate only in vernacular languages have been very regular and are keen in communicating with us.
- Initially, some parents and staff were apprehensive about the Yoga program thinking it would have religious inclinations – (which it certainly does not), and so, were not very cooperative. After a few weeks of regular classes, parent themselves see the benefit and have started coming in with the kids very enthusiastically. They say they even practice the exercises in the ward when we are not there.
- Most of them try very hard to recall information accurately if provided the right clues, time and if they have done their homework.
- The children love to draw and colour or paint and can be very creative.
- The most regular children are the school going age kids between 8 and 14 years of age.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

1. The space provided to us at the ward is quite cramped when more than 20 children come in. It also gets very hot in the afternoon, and there are no fans.
2. 2.30 to 3.00pm is a difficult time for most as they are either eating or having a bath at the time. We find them slowly trickling in after 3.15 pm only. So we would prefer to work between 3.00 and 5.00pm, or maybe in the mornings between 11.00 and 1.00pm, when many more senior citizens, mothers and volunteers are willing to come in to spend quality time with the children.
3. The Social workers room is locked up at 4.00pm. This is where all our material is stored. It is important to give us an accessible area where we can keep our things even when the social workers room is locked.

Requests for Kidwai – Social Work dept and Doctors:

1. A dedicated physical space in the ward that is accessible to children all the time.
2. Access to this area by our staff and volunteers during the hours assigned.
3. Names of new children with their schooling data and languages known.
4. **Some furniture for use by the children and us such as desks, chairs etc.**

A regular briefing by the Doctors and Social Work department, to the children and their caregivers, on the importance of learning and our work would be useful in keeping on target with our programs. This will also help us feel the pulse of the children and their caregiver's requirements, towards achieving our goals and boosting their happiness.

Costs: The costs for all 4 programs are being borne by the Samiksha Foundation.

Suggestions: Sponsors would be welcome to fund some of our material and facilities.

Proposed Schedule for the next months: September onwards:

1. Sunday mornings – One on one Tutoring for older kids (8th,9th and 10th graders) for 2 to 3 hours. This will be managed by our student and Teacher volunteers from International Schools in Bangalore.
2. Monday afternoons: Yoga Meditation
3. Tuesday afternoons: Study time and other activities
4. Thursday Afternoons: Study time and other activities
5. If we get permissions for morning hours, special tutoring for older children could be arranged on weekday mornings.

OUR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF: DEDICATED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS WORK

Ms.Vidyavathy - Librarian and Teacher from Lakkasandra

Mr.Venketesh Kamat - Retired Management Consultant from Domlur- our master storyteller

Ms.Shemeem Karerat- Primary school teacher – Indus International School

Ms.Pavana - College student from Rajarajeswari nagar

Ms Kavya - Engineering student from K.R Puram

Ms.Swathy - Christ University Student

Ms.Shobana - Medical Transcriptionist and qualified Doctor from JP Nagar

Swami Yogaratna – Our Yoga Teacher and Consultant – from Whitefield

Dr.Manjari Bhatnagar - Geophysicist and Director at Samiksha Foundation

Ms.Sandhya Sharad – Architect and Interior Designer and Founder of Samiksha Foundation

All these persons showed regular attendance at Kapoor ward either on Tuesdays or Thursdays, every week of June, July and August 2009, at the assigned times.

Visitors to the program:

Mr.Rajinder Singh

Mr.Shrujan

Mr.Krishna

Ms.Sarah Karerat (student from Indus International school)

Mrs.Bhanumathi

Ms.Manjula (from USA)

CONCLUSION:

The biggest threat to children's ability to learn is not having the opportunity. We at Samiksha will continue to give these children at the hospital, the opportunity they deserve to have.

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