

SAMIKSHA FOUNDATION- CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

SECOND REPORT

Oct 2009 to June 2010

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

www.samikshafoundation.org

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We are currently at Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology at the Kapoor Ward- (Pediatric
Oncology Ward) three days a week...

July 10th 2010

Second Report 2010: Oct 2009 to June 2010

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 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 IN THIS QUARTER:

- A Library of books: About 100 new storybooks were purchased for the library and 2 additional cupboards were installed in the social welfare officer's room. Additional reading material is being regularly added to this library.
- Puzzles and Activity models. Challenging jigsaw puzzles and activity models such as the Scrabble, Word Builders, Tan gram sets have been added to the library.
- School kits for each child. New school kits 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 to new inpatients whenever they come in. Older children of 5th grade upwards are also given a compass box. To date over 300 kits have been distributed to the inpatient children and children in the Dharamsala.
- A mobile Black board facility.
- 6 ceiling fans in the ward areas and common areas.
- School text books in most subjects have been provided for children from 4th to 10th grade. These are in Kannada and English medium as required.

We are grateful to our donors who have donated fans, music system, blackboard and some of the parents who donated books and stationery for the children's use.

3.0 PROGRAMS:

We continue to be at the Kapoor ward of Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bangalore, three days a week. On Sundays we have special visitors and volunteers from different organisations or individuals who come in a spend quality time with the children. Our regular classroom modules have been established on Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday, full days. A typical day timetable covers breathing exercises and centering, reading time, library time, book exchange, story time, study time and art time special math time or puzzle time and art time. (The group is divided into several smaller groups according to the age of the children), Saturday afternoon is dedicated to Yoga for 45 minutes followed by Art Therapy activities.

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

3.1. Library Time:

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

Our full time librarian is now assisted by another librarian is at ward on weekdays. She, along with our volunteers of the day brings books to the children in the wards. These are rotated once a week. The children are encouraged to read the books and 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 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.
- Many 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.
- Some of them have also started maintaining a journal of their own.
- Some children are verbal and prefer to speak about the stories they have read.

Days of week when this is conducted: Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

3.2 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 is happening now, although it could be better. This is possible with a little more involvement from the staff and parents in the ward, and cooperation from other NGOs who come in to work with the children there.

3.3.3. To start with, our librarian and teachers are present thrice a week, (every Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday), between 11.00am and 4.30 pm. They are specialised in activities for

children and are qualified librarians. One is also an early childhood specialist in vernacular language and is a social worker. She conducts activities, learning modules as appropriate on these days and maintains records of the activities and the children's involvement, progress 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:

IN the first half of this period, we had very small children only. We had to maintain peace with parents in the ward about not being a baby-sitting centre. On an average, we had 21 children benefitting from our program in the first half of the period of this report. By January of 2010, we had identified about eight children in older age group and category defined. Our attendance had gone up to about 35 children each session. This trend is continuing to date. 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 these older children on some days, so they can come up to speed with their school work and curriculum.

3.3.5. We have 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 Saraswathy, every Saturday between 2.30 and 3.30pm, after 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.

As part of this program, we do Creative Visualizations and Art Therapy with the kids on these days. This is a unique curriculum developed by Dr. Carl Simonton of the USA that is followed here. Our consultants and mentors are qualified Yoga and Art Therapists.

Currently, the other volunteer group-Youth for Seva, are keenly participating in the yoga program. We have a lot of volunteers coming in on Saturdays to help us in this program.

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.

The Creative visualisation methodology is a powerful tool to healing cancer kids, and helping them augment their acceptance of medical interventions and treatments.

5. THEATRE in Education:

In this period, we have had 3 very interesting programs of Play Back Theatre with our children. Samiksha Foundation is tied up with the Scripts Theatre of NY through the Christ University People's Theatre program. This is a unique experience in Theatre.

Children and caregivers get an opportunity to participate in theatre through narration and play back mode. This is also known to be therapeutic for the mind and body.

6. 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. For this program, we have tied up with Make a Wish foundation also, this quarter. We have referred children to them.

Birthdays at the ward:

Objective: Making the children feel good about themselves.

Our birthdays were celebrated on October 10th, Dec 19th, Jan, March, June

On our Birthday parties, we had different activities for each party ranging from singing groups to Kathalaya. Various people have sponsored the costs of these events. At every such party, we distribute goody bags with fun things for all the kids in the wards. The birthday children are given special birthday gifts too, which are age appropriate.

We have now established a certain routine even for these events so the kids are involved without getting hyperactive. Our team is careful to make sure that the excitement of the parties is not overwhelming or physically exerting for the children. Yoga and breathing centering exercises are part of every such organised event.

On all birthdays, lots of new things, clothes and gifts were distributed to the children along with tons of smiles and laughter.

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

The next party is being planned in August 2010

7. Celebrity Visits

During this period we had 2 special visitors to the ward. Actor Ramya visited Chetan and his friends in November 2009. Actor Mukesh Rishi visited in March 2010.

Both these visits were huge happiness boosters to the children and their caregivers.

OUR 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 story time 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.
- Parents and staff are very enthusiastic about the Yoga program. It is endearing to see families of all denominations come in on Saturdays and participate in this actively. They say they even practice the exercises in the ward when we are not there.
- The kids are also very enthusiastic about the singing in this program.
- Most of them try very hard to recall information accurately- if provided with 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 6 and 14 years of age.

- The participation of the children is most dependent on the participation of the caregivers in some way. If the caregivers are convinced that the mission of the foundation is essential for the children, then the children come in wholeheartedly. Hence, regular awareness programs are needed.

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

Manjula, Mahesh, Prithvi, Sahil, Lokesh, Mithun, Channamma (7th std) Chetan (7th std), Vijay Kumar, Abhishek, Nitin gowda, (9th std), (9th std),Lohith, Chandana,Tejas, Ajay, Gagan,C

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

Naveen (9th std CBSE) Avinash , Abhishek, Abrar(7th) Ayesha (6th), Ayesha (5th),Banu(8th)

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

1. The space provided to us at the ward is cramped when more than 20 children come in. It also gets very hot on summer afternoons and very chilly on winter days.
2. Since we have started our regular fulltime program at the wards, the response of children and staff has been very positive. The seriousness of our purpose has been established.
3. **To date about 62 children have gone back to school in their proper grades without fear and apprehensions of loss of school time during treatment.**
4. The general acceptance of our people is high at KMIO, however, the specifics of space and establishment support have to be addressed.

Requests for KMIO – Social Work dept and Doctors:

1. A dedicated physical space in the ward that is accessible to children all the time would be very useful. The furniture which is already available in the ward areas, but not used - as in desk and chairs maybe allotted for the use by children so they can be more comfortable.
2. Access to this area by our staff and volunteers during the hours assigned.
3. For the healthy practice of Yoga, a large space is required. We sincerely request the authorities at KMIO to provide us the same, or give us the permission to build such a space near and around the Kapoor ward at the ground level. This space could also be used by other NGOs for similar activities if required.

A regular briefing by the Doctors, Nurses and Social Work department, to the children and their caregivers, on the importance of learning, yoga and other educational and creative opportunities we are providing them, 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 7 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: July 2010 onwards:

1. Saturday afternoons: Yoga Creative Visualization and Art Therapy
2. Tuesdays: Study time and other learning activities
3. Thursdays: Study time and other learning activities
4. Special tutoring for older children on weekday mornings.
5. Special Story telling programs

OUR VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF: DEDICATED AND PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS WORK:

Ms.Vidyavathy – Librarian from Lakkasandra

Ms Parvathy -Teacher and Librarian from Wilson Garden

Mr.Chopra - Retired Management Consultant from J.P Nagar – tutors older kids in Math and science.

Ms.Tania Khosla – Graphic designer and Art Therapist – helps with the art program on Saturdays

Ms.Meera Srivatsan- Chartered Accountant and Social worker- regular volunteer at the wards and also helps with office work.

Mr.Phanendra - Regional secretary of YFS- sends volunteers for us from YFS

Ms.Thishya - Engineer- tutors children and organises special programs on Sundays.

Ms.Shobana – Medical Transcriptionist and qualified Dentist from JP Nagar- volunteers at the wards and helps with translations and editing and proofing of our documents.

Ms.Priyanka Minz – Student at Christ University- Interned with the foundation for month.

Ms.Melanie Mendonza – Student at Christ University- interned with the foundation for a month.

Swami Yogaratna – Our Yoga Teacher and Consultant – from Whitefield

Dr.Manjari Bhatnagar- Director of Samiksha Foundation- helps with fundraising and organising events.

Master Aditya Sharad- student volunteer at the foundation. Tutors kids and maintains the website and blog regularly.

Ms.Sandhya Sharad – Founder of Samiksha Foundation

All these persons showed regular attendance at Kapoor ward either on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays every week of the said period, at the assigned times.

Visitors to the program:

Ms. Meenakshi Seth – donator of many books and toys

Mr. Ramesh, Sarawathi and Family

Ms. Shashi Venkat and family

Mrs.Priti Rao and Aparna

Mrs.Rupal Desai and Rohan Desai

Ms.Duhitha, Asha, Santosh and Others from YFS

Trustees Ms.Vijayalakshmi and Mrs.Bhavani Nanjundeswaran

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 learning opportunity they deserve to have.

We are grateful to all those who have donated funds to the foundation without which it would have been difficult to see this second year running smoothly.