

Mid-year report-Oncology

Prepared for Help United Children Foundation

Project update: January-June 2023

Thanks to the generous support of the Help United Children Foundation, Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) was able to provide holistic, lifesaving care to children in Cambodia with cancer.

During the month of May, AHC completed renovations of the Oncology Ward (IPD2) to improve the infrastructure and quality of treatment. The renovations also provide a more safe and private environment for cancer patients to receive chemotherapy treatment.

AHC's first Oncology Nurse, Mr. Saingnan, resigned in May 01, 2023, to work in a government hospital. On June 01, 2023, AHC was fortunate to find an exceptional replacement in experienced nurse team leader, Ms. Phanern Heng. Ms. Phanern's inspiring career journey is the story found at the end of this report.



Vicheka is receiving laser and chemotherapy for bilateral retinoblastoma. His left eye, which had a level five tumour, has already been removed.

During the reporting period, AHC's Oncology Ward diagnosed **51** children with a variety of cancers including: retinoblastoma (RB), acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL), acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) and others. AHC provides high-quality treatment and holistic care to children from across Cambodia, regardless of their ability to pay. This would not be possible without the support of partners like the Help United Children Foundation.

AHC Oncology Programme - Half-year Headlines



51

new cancer diagnoses



10

types of cancer treated



8

patients entered palliative care



25

patients received chemotherapy



91%

patient follow up attendance

Infection Prevention Control (IPC)

AHC maintains rigorous Infection Prevention Control (IPC) protocols across all clinical areas, but especially in the Oncology Ward due to the often vulnerable immune systems of cancer patients. Added to this year's IPC practice is the 5 "S" framework: Sort, Set, Shine, Standard, Sustain. The 5 "S" framework emphasises environmental cleaning and was implemented to improve both patient safety and workplace conditions for staff.

AHC's CT Scanner



March 14, 2023, marked a milestone at AHC, as a patient with optic nerve trauma received the first computed tomography (CT) scan performed at the hospital. In the first three months of operation, AHC provided 79 scans to 71 patients.

Procedures relating to oncology, respiratory, and neurology accounted for the majority of the patient conditions. The most common diagnosis for patients requiring a CT scan thus far is retinoblastoma (RB), a deadly paediatric eye cancer.

An on-site CT scanner is important for quickly diagnosing cancer patients who present late. Speeding up the diagnosis process for critical cases can greatly improve their chances for successful treatment.

Why do we need an oncology nurse?

Nurses are responsible for the day-to-day care of AHC's patients, working closely with medical staff and other departments. Oncology nurses serve as the primary staff to provide specialised cancer treatment and care. Apart from providing treatment, nurses are also responsible for educating caregivers on child health practices. The AHC Oncology Nurse works under the direct supervision of IPD Nursing Manager and will coordinate within the Oncology Team to ensure that project is running well.

Below are the main responsibilities of our current Oncology Nurse:



Cooperate within the team to develop oncology guidelines



Safely administer chemotherapy drugs to patients



Arrange cancer patient schedule for chemotherapy and other treatment



Complete daily record logbook or/and data base for Oncology Ward



Follow up with oncology patients in case of missed appointment or abandoned treatment



Manage oncology supplies and work with logistic staff maintain needed supplies



Organise weekly online case conference with international oncology mentors



Arrange patients and document for CT Scanner when needed

AHC's Oncology Nurse Daily Work



Oncology Nurse educating caregivers about infection prevention and chemotherapy waste management



Oncology Nurse assisting a doctor to administer chemotherapy

Challenges

- Chemotherapy drugs are highly toxic, so nurses and doctors have to be very careful and follow all hospital safety protocols to reduce the risks.
- The new Oncology Nurse just started working full time in the Oncology Ward, so she still has lots to learn to improve her specialisation.
- It is always sad to see the caregivers refuse the treatment for their children for incurable cancer. The Oncology Team has to work together with social workers to help them mentally prepare.
- To operate the Oncology Ward efficiently, it requires determination, dedication, expertise, modern facilities, quality medical equipment and advanced treatment.

Looking ahead



Longdy and mother Cheata back at AHC for a blood check up. Longdy successfully completed his three-year treatment for ALL in March 2023.

- Expand cancer treatment for Cambodia's children.
- Improve expertise of the Oncology Team through continuous trainings, study tours and conferences, locally and internationally.
- Looking for funding to replace old equipment and buy new equipment such as toxicology machines and hire a data assistant for Oncology Ward.

Your support is crucial to helping AHC achieve financial sustainability and transform healthcare in Cambodia.

“It is a sad place but also a place of hope. I want to be their hope.”

A nurse with a remarkable career journey spanning almost two decades at AHC has joined the oncology team.



In 2006, Heng Phanern was one of ten candidates out of 100 applicants selected to work as a nurse at AHC. While at nursing school in 2005, she interned at AHC and was determined to return as a graduate.

“I was really proud of myself when I got selected,” remembers Phanern. “AHC was my dream place to work. It was a tough competition, but I made it!”

Phanern began her nursing career at AHC’s Inpatient Department (IPD), caring for children with various medical conditions such as pneumonia and malnutrition. In 2012, she transferred to the newly established Neonatal Unit and received specialty training in neonatal critical care for four months in Thailand. She learned how to manage newborns with complex and life-threatening issues such as premature birth and respiratory distress.

By 2013, AHC’s oncology programme began. A small team of nurses, including Phanern, worked in shifts to care for children with cancer.

“At that time, AHC did not have a dedicated oncology ward or nurse,” shared Phanern. “We took turns caring for cancer patients. It was an impactful experience. I knew I wanted to contribute to helping patients with cancer more in the future.”

Phanern became IPD nursing team leader in 2015, and in June 2023, she officially joined the oncology team. As the dedicated oncology nurse in the ward, she is responsible for preparing all materials for chemotherapy treatment, handling the toxic chemicals and providing successful injections with support from the doctors. She also coordinates teamwork with other teams such as surgery, nutrition, medical social work and pharmacy to ensure all children receiving treatment for cancer get the best care.



Nurse Phanern administering chemotherapy on a patient

“As an oncology nurse, I can help children suffering from this devastating disease,” shared Phanern. “It is a sad place but also a place of hope. I want to be their hope.”

With her strong heart, Phanern is an example of the many dedicated nurses committed to constantly improving her knowledge and skills for every child admitted at AHC to receive the best quality care.