



## Lion dance gave leukaemia-stricken boy, 10, the will to live

LIANHE ZAOBAO (/SOURCE/LIANHE-ZAOBAO) | Jul 19, 2017

SINGAPORE - For more than half of his life, 10-year-old Boon Kye Feng fought against the cancerous cells in his body. It was his dream to become a lion dancer that kept him going.

It was late 2011 that Kye Feng developed spots and bruises on his body and was eventually diagnosed with juvenile myelomonocytic leukaemia (JMML), a rare form of leukaemia.

JMML is so rare that his blood samples had to be sent to Germany to confirm the diagnosis.

Kye Feng then began chemotherapy at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) in 2012 to control the condition while waiting for a bone marrow transplant. Fortunately, Kye Feng's mother was pregnant with his youngest sister and her cord blood turned out to be Kye Feng's saviour.

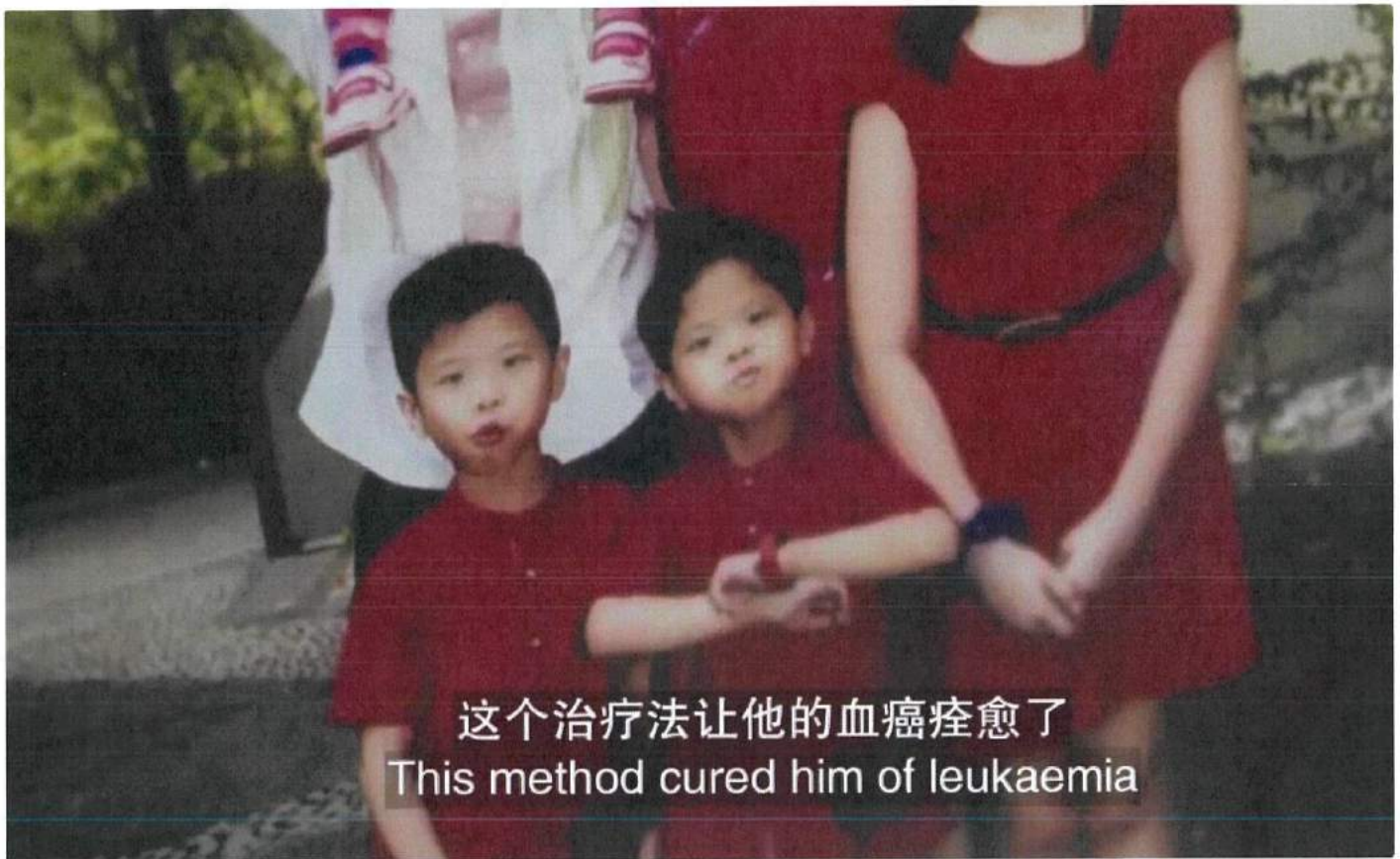


Photo: Video screengrab

Kye Feng recovered after the transplant and even started attending primary school together with his twin brother. Sadly, a few months later, the doctors found out the cancer returned.

Devastated, his parents sought a second opinion from the National University Hospital (NUH) and entered into the care of Associate Professor Tan Poh Lin from the paediatric haematology-oncology division.

While doctors from both hospitals suggested a second transplant for Kye Feng, there was more bad news. His illness was mutating into mixed-phenotype acute leukaemia, a combination of two forms of cancer. He also faced a life-threatening infection that caused high fever and bloating.





Photo: Video screengrab

Besides beginning palliative care to improve his quality of life, his parents continued to push for treatment. Those included natural killer-cell therapy and the removal of Kye Feng's enlarged spleen in a complicated seven-hour operation.

Doctors usually recommend transplants only when patients register no leukaemic cells. Kye Feng was running out of time. Doctors declared he only have 6 months to live if he did not go through with the transplant. Left with no other choice, his parents went ahead with the operation in September 2015- this time using stem cells from his mother.

Kye Feng fought hard and a miracle happened. His body responded well to his mother's stem cells.

The first three months after the procedure were crucial but Kye Feng got past it without difficulties. The only issue was that he had developed a graft versus host disease (GVHD) one year later. Still, his parents were relieved that it was not another relapse. He was put on medication for GVHD and has since recovered completely.

This brave little fighter fought for his life, yet all this cannot be made possible without the thing he cherished most - lion dance.

The boy loves lion dance so much that he calls himself "Lion King Feng". As a student, he even labels all his belongings with that name.





Kye Feng gets a chance to train  
Photo: Video screengrab

### The Dream

Lion dance is nothing but a sport to some, but it gave Kye Feng the will to live. When he was undergoing treatment in the hospital, the bedridden boy would watch lion dance videos on the Internet. On days when he felt better, he would play lion dance music on his little drum in the ward.

His mother, Celine Boon (38), recalled, "On certain days when Kye Feng is feeling under the weather, he would ask me when can he leap and dance in his costume again? My reply to him is always 'Let's go when you are well okay?'" She never thought that her casual promise fueled Kye Feng to beat the odds and fight his way to recovery.

This young fighter has many dreams - he wants to ride a lamborghini, receive training from a lion dance shifu (mentor) and most importantly, he wants to perform lion dance with his idol Weiliang, one of the lead actors in the movie "The Lion Men".

### The Challenge





Photo: Video screengrab

When host Ken Low approached Weiliang, the local actor was more than willing to fulfil this little boy's dream. However being a celebrity, Weiliang does not manage his own schedule. Weiliang also started filming for an upcoming movie and his schedule is fully packed till September.

"Kye Feng made me his idol, I have to fulfil his dream!" Kye Feng's story touched Weiliang so much that he made the effort to rearrange his schedules to meet this little boy.

To prepare for the upcoming lion dance performance, Kye Feng has to receive official training. Halfway through a stance, he suddenly broke down in tears and cried out, "I am scared."

Kye Feng spent most of his childhood in the hospital. Although he is well enough to receive education now, his immune system remains weak and hence he is currently attending lessons in the Singapore Children's Cancer Foundation with a class size of no more than 10 people.

"Kye Feng's outgoing and cheerful personality have us all fooled. We have all forgotten the fact that Kye Feng grew up in a very controlled environment, deprived of the usual interactions with peers that others get to enjoy. Perhaps this is why Kye Feng felt overwhelmed when he was suddenly thrown into an unfamiliar environment with older children," said Ken.

Being a natural-born fighter, Kye Feng fought back his fears and tears and continued receiving guidance from the lion dance master.



Photo: Video screengrab

### The Lesson

When Weiliang first met Kye Feng, what caught his eyes was not the boy's petite size, but the passion in his eyes. "It is unfair that Kye Feng has to go through so much at such a young age but he taught me a valuable lesson. It is the fact that how you live your life depends entirely on you, perseverance does not come from other people, it is an attitude you need to put into practice."

Weiliang was so motivated by Kye Feng that he gave him his phone number so that Kye Feng can contact him directly in future whenever he wants.

"Through his moves, Kye Feng seems to be telling all of us that 'I may be sick, but I still have a dream!' So what excuses does the rest of us have?"





Kye Feng with his idol, Weiliang  
Photo: Video screengrab

Being a celebrity has its own ups and downs. There are times when Weiliang has doubts about his decision to become an actor.

Witnessing Kye Feng's pursuit of his dream strengthened Weiliang's conviction to become a better actor. "I told myself that I do not wish to only see stability in my life when I look back at my past. Only through experiencing life's ups and downs can I fully understand how the world is like."

Host Ken Low was also moved by Kye Feng's passion for lion dance. "Video games, the Internet, toys, there are simply too many distractions in this world. Yet Kye Feng's dedication for lion dance remains so wholeheartedly despite all the odds he has been through. It is just a matter of your mind."

Watch the video to see Kye Feng dance to the passion that saved his life.

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