



Media Release

VIVA-CCF Hub – Singapore's First Integrated Hub to support patients with childhood cancer and their families

7 March 2013 – The VIVA-CCF Hub, Singapore's first integrated hub to support patients with childhood cancer and their families; was officially opened this evening by Mrs. Mary Tan, wife of Singapore President Tony Tan.

The 18,500 square foot space on the third level of Novena Specialist Centre is donated by Far East Organisation, in support of VIVA Foundation's continuous efforts to enhance services for children with cancer and their families; through shared resources and collaborative activities and programmes.

The space currently houses the VIVA Foundation for Children with Cancer, Children's Cancer Foundation, Singapore Cord Blood Bank (Administrative Office). More charities involved with treatment and support to patients and families affected by cancer and critical childhood illness, are expected to join the Hub over the next few months.

"Working together with our colleagues synergistically at the Hub allows us to enhance services to children with cancer through shared resources and further coordination of activities and programmes. This is particularly important for patient, family and community education and awareness," highlighted Mrs Theresa Foo, Chairman of VIVA Foundation.

Through this synergy, PALS (Place for Academic Learning and Support) was set-up by the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) to help children and youths with cancer with their transition back to school. These children and youths



are unable to return to school during and after their treatment due to their immune-compromised conditions. The learning centre, operating in an infection-controlled environment with dietician-approved meals; provides a conducive environment for academic coaching, e-learning, experiential learning and integrative therapies that prepare the students intellectually, emotionally and socially for a smooth transition back to school.

On 1 November 2012, the new learning centre opened its doors to the first cohort of 16 students. From this initial cohort, five (5) students have already returned to main stream schools. The centre currently has 19 students, ranging from pre-school to secondary level.

Shameen, a pioneer student currently attending PALS was diagnosed with leukaemia when he was three. He did not have the opportunity to attend pre-school until he enrolled at PALS. "We were a little worried in the beginning since the idea of going to school is very new to Shameem, but we were surprised. Shameen loved the PALS environment from the moment he attended the orientation session and was raring to go to school to learn new things. Today, he looks forward to going to PALS and has made new friends," expressed Shariff, father of Shameen.

Beyond academic learning, PALS has also fostered friendship among its students, through interacting and sharing with peers with similar medical conditions, in a fun and supportive environment. It has also provided a place for caregivers to meet and share their experiences with one another.

When CCF and SCBB beneficiary, Teng Hong Yi was diagnosed with CML (Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia), a rare blood cancer; at nine years of age, his family was curious on how he had acquired the condition. "Although we had the support from the medical staff and from the CCF Social Workers in the hospital, an integrated hub like VIVA-CCF Hub would help bring together



families like ours, searching for information and sharing experiences with other caregivers”, shared Hong Yi’s mother, Ms. Regina Soong.

The sharing of experiences would have been especially helpful as Hong Yi’s condition did not improve, even after being on medication for a year and had to undergo an unrelated Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant. They are not able to find a match amongst his siblings and immediate family. Searches through various International Stem Cell Registries were unsuccessful; but, they managed to find a fully matched donor from SCBB.

“We knew that finding a match is not easy and didn’t think that we would be so fortunate to find a 100% match. We are very thankful to the parents that have donated their baby’s cord blood as this give Hong Yi a new lease of life.”, said a very thankful Ms. Soong.

The SCBB is a non-profit public cord blood bank that was set up in response to a demand for unrelated donor umbilical cord blood for transplantation therapy by Haematologists and Paediatricians in Singapore. While there are large number of donors of Caucasian origin in bone marrow and cord blood registries around the world, 65% - 80% of Asians worldwide are currently unable to find a suitable match. As a result, many Singaporeans and patients in Asia have succumbed to diseases that might otherwise have been successfully treated with a blood stem cell transplant. Since its’ first cord blood release in 2006, SCBB has facilitated a total of 124 cord blood transplants for children and adults in Singapore and around the world.

Through the collaboration of charities in the VIVA-CCF Hub, we hope to make a difference in the lives of children who are impacted by childhood cancer.



About VIVA Foundation for Children with Cancer

VIVA Foundation for Children with Cancer was set-up in 2006 to improve the survival rate and cure of children with cancer, especially childhood leukaemia, in Singapore and the region. For leukaemia, VIVA aspires to raise the cure rate to 90%, the high benchmark set by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Viva Foundation was established with three main goals:-

- 1) Establishing a world-class Children's Cancer Centre at the National University Health System (NUHS), Singapore;
- 2) Promoting clinical research and treatment of childhood cancer; and
- 3) Advancing the training of doctors and nurses from Singapore and the region.

Since it was founded, VIVA has sponsored the St Jude-VIVA Forum each year since 2006. The Forum facilitates knowledge sharing and working groups between >200 participants of the Singapore and regional medical community and world-renowned oncologists and scientists. In 2008, VIVA opened the VIVA-University Children's Cancer at NUH, a one-stop, child-friendly, cancer treatment centre, offering a range of treatments ranging from chemotherapy to cell-based therapies. In 2012, VIVA successfully raised funds for an unrivalled leukaemia research and diagnostics laboratory in Asia. We hope to launch the project later this year.

Through active facilitation of close working relationships with its partners, the Viva Foundation hopes to further advance the care of patients with childhood cancer in Singapore and Asia and save the lives of as many children as possible.

About Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF)

Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) is a non-profit organisation impassioned with the mission of improving the quality of lives of children with cancer and their families through enhancing their emotional, social and medical well-being. Since 1992, CCF has helped more than 2,000 children and their families at its Resource Centre located at KK Women's & Children's Hospital (KKH) and the National University Hospital (NUH), providing them with the much needed support in their battle against the life-threatening illness.

CCF has adopted an integrated hospital-home-community service model for children and youths with cancer and their families to efficiently assist them through the different stages of the illness and recovery.

For a full list of our services and programmes, visit us at www.ccf.org.sg.



About Singapore Cord Blood Bank (SCBB)

The Singapore Cord Blood Bank (SCBB) is Singapore's only non-profit public cord blood bank. The SCBB was officially opened in September 2005, and was set up in response to a demand for unrelated donor umbilical cord blood for transplantation therapy by Haematologists and Paediatricians in Singapore.

Since its' first release in 2006, SCBB has facilitated a total of 124 cord blood transplants for children and adults in Singapore and around the world. Many of patients would otherwise succumb to their diseases without finding a suitable stem cell from this life-saving resource.

The SCBB is a national cord blood resource supported by Singapore's public healthcare clusters – SingHealth and the National Healthcare Group; two volunteer welfare organisations – Children's Cancer Foundation and Club Rainbow Singapore as well as philanthropic foundations – the Khoo, Lee, Shaw and SingHealth Foundations. It is also a programme supported by various organisations and philanthropists.

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