

Project B.T.S

07-15

Area of Concern

As the **leading cause of cancer death**¹, brain tumours in children are becoming increasingly prevalent in Singapore. Regardless benign or malignant, brain tumours damage a child's neurological development and can lead to death. Mood swings, memory loss impede their learning and confidence. The siblings of a patient also feel alienated because of a lack of attention given by their family, a condition better known as the Invisible Sibling Syndrome. It is thus important to provide social, emotional-support for both, patients and caregivers, who face emotional burdens.

There is generally little knowledge made known about the illness in Singapore. As a result, it is necessary to also educate the public about brain tumour in children and the after effects of surgery. Moreover, there was previously no support group child patients could receive social-emotional support from.

Hence, Brain Tumour Society of Singapore (BTSS) was formed in 2014, the only charity that provides said patients with social-emotional support. However, they lack outreach and manpower.

Some common misconceptions include assuming that communication with patients is almost impossible because of their disabilities or that brain tumours are contagious. Patients feel ostracised by the public despite these assumptions being baseless. In reality, patients often avoid communication with others for fear of being discriminated against.

This was the reason why we formed Project B.T.S, the only project in Singapore working on this cause. We wish to raise public awareness of the condition as well as to provide child patients and their families with social-emotional support through events

¹ Laurie Mcginley. (2016). The Washington Post . Retrieved 6 August, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/09/16/brain-cancer-replaces-leukemia-as-the-leading-cause-of-cancer-deaths-in-kids/?utm_term=.1672fe1eccbe

organised. We hope that these young patients will not be discriminated against and can integrate into mainstream society with confidence as they grow up.

Underlying Problem

Given that brain tumour in children is a condition that can have an adverse effect in the lives of child patients, how might we provide social-emotional support to these children, as well as raise public awareness about brain tumour in children to help them face the world with courage and confidence as they grow up.

Achievements

We planned our initiatives in accordance to these two main aims and this table illustrates the various achievements we have made in terms of meeting our objectives.

Advocating Welfare	Raising Awareness
<p>Weekly Tuition Session</p> <p>We pushed out our weekly enrichment classes programme that is open to both brain tumour patients and their siblings, in hopes of providing academic support as we are aware that their condition has heavily impacted their learning processes. In order to target each student's needs and provide personal attention, we specially tailor each student's curriculum to match their learning pace and develop personal pedagogy to better aid patients in their learning, such as utilising visual aids and puzzles. Through our classes, we also hope to provide emotional support for the children as we welcome them to share with us their problems and worries and try our best to provide consultation. We also hope that through our constant encouragement, they are able to slowly build back up their confidence and morale to better tackle challenges through their struggles with their condition. With a dedicated team of</p>	<p>Carnival Metanoia</p> <p>Our upcoming awareness raising carnival includes games which incorporates common patient difficulties to invoke empathy in the public. Through brochures that contain bite-sized facts and myths, we are able to battle common misconceptions the public may have against brain tumour patients, allowing us to help weed out discrimination against them in society. This allows patients to not cower in fear because of their condition and worry about being looked down on in public. We hope that the participants of the carnival can also develop a willingness to offer help to the brain tumour community, a result observed in our carnival last year.</p>

<p>twenty volunteers, we have conducted over 75 tuition sessions and helped 21 students.</p>	
<p>A Skill A Term Initiative</p> <p>Patients are introduced to a new hobby every term, be it culinary or the arts. We hope to develop their interests/potentials and boost confidence. This also provides a platform for patients to be creative and challenge themselves despite the difficulties they might face because of their condition. In fact, on average, 86% of our participants have felt that we have made an impact on their lives by providing learning opportunities that have been limited due to financial difficulties at home.</p>	<p>Awareness Campaign @ HCI</p> <p>We set up an exhibition in school with included interactive games for students to learn more about brain tumours. Students also pledged their support to bring the discussion of brain tumours to a larger scale so that more people are aware of the condition. Through this event, we were able to outreach to more than 400 students in our school population and educate them.</p>
<p>Aurora New Year Party</p> <p>To celebrate the new year, Qian Hu Fish Farm sponsored a farm visit for our beneficiaries and Keat Hong Community Club facilitated a terrarium-making workshop. Participants were able to appreciate nature and spend quality family time.</p>	<p>Social Media Campaign</p> <p>We reached out to our 2300 followers and more through Instagram. We posted facts and myths weekly about brain tumours to correct misconceptions. We also frequently shared inspirational stories, as a way to show the world that even with their condition, our beneficiaries are stronger than the public thinks. In fact, this can spread the message that</p>

	determination and perseverance is crucial in life.
<p>June “Embrace” Camp</p> <p>With the theme of “Embrace”, we hoped to develop socio-emotional skills in patients and for them to recognise the importance of embracing negative emotions. Through our specially designed games and handcrafts workshop, sponsored by 10Square@Orchard Central, participants learnt to interact with others and volunteers better emphasized with patients. We are more than happy to share that one of our beneficiaries, Celeste, has actually took on the passion of painting, gaining inspiration from our camp. She has went on to paint canvas bags to raise funds for BTSS.</p>	

Team Organisation

*An IC delegates the event/work aspect's jobscope and manages the event by scheduling meetings and presenting new ideas.

Noah Tang	Tek Kai Zhen	Khoo Xuren	Mock Zhen Yuan	Lee Zonglin, Tristan
Team Leader	Secretary	Treasurer	Carnival Metanoia IC	Team Welfare IC
Aurora New Year Party IC	June Embrace Camp IC	Awareness Campaign IC	Design AIC	Tuition Programme IC
Publicity IC	CIP Hours IC		Publicity AIC	

Reflections

1) **Lack of communication** between involved parties

Having worked in this project for over a year, interaction with our beneficiaries was no longer an obstacle for us. However, there was an apparent lack of communication between the various organisers for our events, which delayed the planning and execution process. While this may have hindered us, it did not stop us from trying our best and doing what we can for our beneficiary.

2) **Change in beneficiary's needs**

When we started out last year, we had three aims. However, after being awarded a huge amount of sponsorship, the beneficiary was more interested in the welfare we could provide. As a result, our work style and plan of action had to undergo a change to suit to the beneficiary's new needs.

3) **A change in mindset**

Throughout the project, we were able to learn to better empathise with the brain tumour community and those who are less fortunate in general. It was eye-opening as we were directly exposed to the difficulties such patients faced on a daily basis since we had to work closely with them, making us learn to adapt to new challenges. We learnt the importance of promoting inclusivity in society through understanding how the public sometimes shuns away from our beneficiaries. To not attach social stigma easily was definitely a takeaway we had from every interaction with the patients. Lastly, we learnt that even though we are just students, there is so much that we could do to provide our help to improve the situations they were in and are extremely proud of the efforts our team have produced. You are never too young to give

back to the community and that is a motto that we hope to share with our audiences and encourage more youths to step up to contribute.

1000 words, excluding footnote on Page 2.