



Cooperation improves care of sick children in Vietnam and Sweden

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Lund University Hospital has commenced a six-year collaboration with a children's hospital in northern Vietnam. The objective is to develop care so that more children in the region can survive severe cancer conditions. At the same time, Swedish doctors and nurses are gaining unique knowledge on paediatric care and research in another country.

Professor Nguyen Thanh Liem, at the National Hospital of Pediatrics in Hanoi says: "In the long term, this collaboration provides a basis for the modernisation of cancer care for children throughout Vietnam."

He points out that that the cooperation with Sweden has helped the hospital improve both its diagnoses and treatment. In addition, he says, the structure of care has improved.

The Children's Hospital in Hanoi was built with the help of Swedish aid and opened in 1981. Following the completion of that support, a six-year agreement has been signed between the Paediatric Oncology Department at Lund University Hospital and the National Hospital of Pediatrics in Hanoi. Cooperation will extend until 2013 with Swedish physicians on site for about one week a month and with doctors and nurses from Hanoi receiving regular training in Sweden. Lund University is also benefiting from the new contacts by organising courses in Hanoi for Swedish medical students as part of its own medical training programme.

"We benefit greatly from the cooperation," explains Christian Moëll, a paediatrician at Lund University Hospital and one of the initiators of the cooperation programme. "Our doctors have the opportunity to meet physicians with other experiences, to meet more patients and to conduct

research not possible in Sweden because we don't have certain diseases here."

Small changes make a big difference

Each year, about 1,700 children in northern Vietnam contract cancer and only about 5 percent of them survive. In Sweden, nearly 80 percent of children who get cancer survive.

Christian Moëll explains: "Often, small changes can make a big difference. At the hospital in Hanoi, for example, all of the patients in the cancer department shared the same ward regardless of whether they were there as outpatients for the day, had

been admitted for treatment or were very ill and sensitive to infections. Simply dividing the children up between three areas of the ward brought a big improvement."

The cooperation programme allows Vietnamese doctors and nurses to share the experience and expertise accumulated by their colleagues at Lund University Hospital over 30 years of successful cancer care.

"We start by focusing on two relatively common diseases, acute leukaemia and Wilms' tumour, a type of kidney disease. With correctly implemented treatment, it's possible to achieve good results here. As time progresses, we then start to look at other diseases," Christian Moëll continues.

Christian Moëll and his colleagues also help structure child cancer care through procedures for reception, registration, treatment and care of children and their relatives. Proce-



Jacek Toporski and Anders Castor from Lund University Hospital conduct an X-ray round for Vietnamese doctors.



With improved structure in child cancer care in Vietnam, as well as developed methods for diagnosis and treatment, mortality will decrease.

dures are also needed for documentation, follow-up and treatment protocols, if it is to be possible to measure results and disseminate experience and knowledge.

IKEA Social Initiative foots the bill

The cooperation between the two hospitals is financed entirely by IKEA, within the framework of its IKEA Social Initiative. On site in Hanoi, Sida assists by providing contacts and other practical necessities.

The programme also involves training and development at the paediatric units of a further seven hospitals in northern Vietnam.

According to Christian Moëll, “A major problem is that many parents discontinue their children’s treatment prematurely. There are many reasons, both economic and social. For some parents, it would take a two-day journey by moped to reach the hospital in Hanoi, which for many is impossible. For this reason, it’s important to



Ewa Frid and Hoăng Ahn attempt to pronounce each other’s names.

develop child cancer care throughout the region.”

The intention is for the National Hospital of Pediatrics to take care of the complicated diagnostic procedures and initial care while other hospitals provide subsequent ongoing care.

Christian Moëll continues: “Another important part of the cooperation involves contacts with the politicians responsible and convincing them to invest more in this type of care and demonstrating the results.”



Nurses Ingrid Hagelin and Do Thi Bich Ngoc discuss key hygiene procedures.

Vietnam is one of the countries where Swedish aid is changing. Cooperation between various Swedish players – authorities, organisations and businesses – and partners in the country is increasingly taking place on equal terms and through mutual interest. The objective is long-term self-sustaining relations, for the partners in the countries and for the people living in poverty.

Sida is stimulating Partner Driven Cooperation by facilitating contacts, arranging meeting, disseminating knowledge regarding possible partners and markets, as well as providing initial financial support.