

PLAY FOR CHILD HEALTH SEMINAR

Multidisciplinary Collaboration in Hong Kong

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Playright Children's Play Association (Playright) is a non-profit organization in Hong Kong that strives to build a society that respects, protects and fulfills a Child's Right to Play. We believe that hospital play (child life) practice is an essential component of quality care to children in hospital and pediatric patients should have access to a child life specialist. Our hospital play service began in 1994, and Playright now provides services to 7 of the 14 public hospitals in Hong Kong with pediatric departments. In the current system, hospital play specialists and child life specialists are not employed by hospitals. The services are operated by non-profit organizations like Playright. Similar to child life professionals in the US, Hospital Play

Specialists utilize therapeutic play interventions to ease children's fear and anxiety related to medical procedures and hospitalization, creating a more positive patient experience for children and their families in the pediatric wards. Aside from medical collaboration, we also support the creation of child-friendly environments with play, art and leisure activities, form community partnerships, and provide training and consultancy services to related stakeholders.

In February 2023, as part of the "Jockey Club Playright P.L.A.Y. for Child Health" project (funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust), Playright hosted the PLAY for Child Health Seminar in collaboration with the Hong Kong Children's Hospital (HKCH) to promote the role of play in the pediatric patient's journey and advocate for the integration of hospital play services into children's holistic care pathway in Hong Kong. This article summarizes key takeaways from the Seminar and future directions of our service development in Hong Kong.

Deepening our bond with the international Child Life community, Playright was honored to have key representatives from the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) join us, including Board President Ms. Lindsay Heering and CEO Ms. Alison Heron. In the week leading up to the Seminar, Lindsay and Alison visited Hong Kong's public hospitals and learned about Playright's hospital play services in Hong Kong. There was



ample sharing of best practices between Playright and ACLP, as well as with healthcare executives, heads of healthcare associations, and various medical teams. Lindsay shared the following about Playright's work in Hong Kong: "We were impressed by the quality of work being done by our Hong Kong child life colleagues and the number of champions and advocates for child life and hospital play."

On the other hand, we also formed stronger bonds with the healthcare community. Over 700 healthcare professionals in Hong Kong attended the PLAY for Child Health Seminar in-person and virtually, including physicians, nurses, radiologists, anesthesiologists and other allied health professionals. Eighteen speakers from Hong Kong and other countries showcased hospital play practices across multiple disciplines, including Endocrinology, Nephrology, Infectious Diseases, Radiology, Anesthesiology, Orthopedics and Palliative Care. Hong Kong's Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Libby Lee, opened the seminar with an address about children's needs to play and importance of psychological preparation of upcoming procedures. ACLP Board President Lindsay Heering also shared on the topic of "Child Life: A Standard of Care within Pediatric Healthcare".

The PLAY for Child Health Seminar successfully raised awareness of the importance of play for

quality of care for pediatric patients. It enabled health care professionals across specialties to learn about hospital play services and be attuned to current service needs. Service statistics shared during the seminar – including the number of beneficiaries, types of interventions, and patient feedback -- helped inform our organization how to develop our services going forward. For those less familiar with Playright's work, the seminar provided a more comprehensive understanding of what we do. Overall, the participants' feedback was highly positive, it opened the dialogue to include the broader community of child life and healthcare professionals. Through this exchange, we were able to strengthen multidisciplinary collaboration and joint efforts in a more effective way.

Truly, this seminar is the beginning of a stronger relationship with the healthcare and child life communities. At present, hospital play specialists in Hong Kong are employed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and not overseen by a statutory body. With increasing service demand, the need for well-defined training, accreditation, and continuing professional development is essential. We intend for our team to widen their horizons and foster an international perspective on hospital play and child life practices. This includes training and qualifications that meet international standards, as well as opportunities

to connect with child life professionals in different countries. On the service side, Playright aims to strengthen collaboration with hospitals and the wider community, and with additional funding, widening our service scope to include pediatric cases from specialties such as anesthesiology, radiology, and endocrinology, etc. We have also received service requests from the day surgery center. We believe the future direction of hospital play is in multidisciplinary collaboration. It may also be the key to sustaining hospital play

services in Hong Kong. We envision hospital play specialists not as an isolated role but instead part of the multidisciplinary team effort, contributing to patients' psychosocial well-being. Through combined knowledge and expertise, we can work together to provide the best care that meets the physical and psychosocial needs of pediatric patients.

We welcome like-minded individuals and organizations to connect with us. Please feel free to email us at info@playright.org.hk

