





# Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation

Impact Report 2019

Phil' Arc UNSW Student Life

# You Made a Difference

Phil' Arc UNSW Student Life fundraising campaigns raised a tremendous

 **\$150,193.00** 

through their amazing efforts, helping us fund priority areas for the children and the families looked after at the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. Phil' has made a major commitment to the care of sick kids, over the last 5 years, through Child Life Music therapy, by funding the following major projects:

- Position of Child Life Therapist in the Emergency Department, Amy Langron
- Position of Music Therapist, Monica Lee (part-funded)

Child Life and Music Therapy are key to providing the very best possible care to children and their families at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. These dedicated teams work to reduce the traumatic impact of pain and fear that can occur during a hospital visit using a variety of techniques.





# Child Life and Music Therapy

**Child Life and Music Therapy** empowers children and makes them more resilient in their ability to move forward through daunting experiences.

First and foremost, play in the Hospital normalises the environment, helping to relieve stress and boredom and create a more positive experience. The team use special dolls to show how certain medical procedures work to make sure patients are prepared before, during and after treatments such as MRI's, cannula and central line insertions. Therapists use therapeutic and developmental play as well as medical play to support the needs of patients. Therapeutic and developmental play allows continuity of life away from the hospital, including working towards child-development milestones. Medical play is focused on allowing the patients and families to become familiar with medical equipment and desensitised to things that might usually be confronting.

Child Life and Music Therapy is vital to creating a positive environment and making Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick an outstanding healthcare facility for our young patients and their families.



# Emma Story

Emma was born at 24 weeks with extremely low birth weight and was diagnosed with a multitude of medical conditions affecting her physical and psychological development. Emma is a long term patient of the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and due to her extreme prematurity, Emma spent the first few months of her life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and was transferred to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at 6 months of age. Now, almost one, Emma has been transferred from PICU to our Renal and Cardiac ward.

Music therapist, Monica, spoke to both parents about her role and some of the goals they could work on together during Emma's hospital admission, both parents received the offer of music therapy intervention with positivity.

During the first few weeks, Emma's parents appeared distant, anxious and overwhelmed with Emma's medical treatment and prognosis. They were extremely teary as they spoke about their fragile daughter and the difficulty and the barrier that they had been feeling especially in terms of trying to bond and connect with her.

Emma is seen by a music therapist 2-3 times per week and is still currently receiving ongoing music therapy sessions. During the initial stages, the focus of the music therapy session was on:

- Developing trust between the therapist and family, building rapport and understanding what is important for them as a family
- Facilitate a healthy parent-child bonding experience
- Reducing stress and trauma associated with long term hospitalisation

This was facilitated by the use of various music therapy techniques and interventions along with the family-centred approach. Parents and children in the hospital often feel a sense of lack of choice and control whilst in hospital. Music therapy is one way in which Emma's parents exercised their sense of control as they were allowed to decline the music therapy session if they did not wish to participate on that day or at that particular time. Parents were also allowed to select the use of various instruments, make song choices, listen or sing along with the music therapist or even just be present in the session as an observer.

# Emma Story

One of the ways in which the music therapist address the goals is through singing familiar songs and playing songs that were meaningful for the family. Emma's mother reported that she, along with Emma's older sister, used to sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star to Emma whilst she was still in the womb, they also sang a few other nursery rhymes and songs from movies.

Providing familiar songs and voices gives a sense of calmness, comfort, predictability and regularity which reduced levels of anxiety and distress. On many occasions, singing and providing soft gentle relaxation music contributed to increased stabilisation of both oxygen saturation and of heart rate. Making music together through infant-directed singing allowed space for the parent and Emma to uniquely attune to each other, promoting healthy attachment. The act of singing and music-making allowed parents to breathe more deeply and become more focused on Emma as their child rather than as a patient or a sick child. Singing also contributed to more prolonged face-to-face contact and more diversified expressions of affection. The emotional ambience, the feeling of positivity and enjoyment is central in addressing the negative emotions experienced by both the parents and Emma. Some of the negative emotions stated included anxiety, sadness, loss, lack of control, loneliness and frustration.

By sharing inherently positive moments in music, these negative emotions were ameliorated, making space for positive emotions to emerge. Emma's mother always smiled during and after the music therapy session and often described the sessions as a fun and enjoyable experience for her as it allowed her to spend quality time with her daughter and create positive memories. Providing positive engagement and memory-making opportunities allowed affect and mood to brighten, as well as feelings of worry to subside. It also creates positive coping mechanisms for the parents and Emma, which parents report, has increased their confidence in providing care for Emma within the hospital environment.

During the last 6 months, Music therapy has contributed to empowering parents, through relaxation, overcoming the fear of interacting with Emma and strengthening their maternal and paternal competences. Emma has built a strong bond with her parents and interacts positively and would often vocalise her excitement when her parents come to visit. The focus now is on developing physical strength and working towards achieving age-appropriate developmental milestones in the hope that one day soon she will be discharged from hospital and into the care of her loving family.

# ♥ Child Life Therapy stats

The Child Life Therapy amazing craft packs allow the opportunity for all staff to engage with the children in a child-friendly way, a way that gives the child control and provides them something familiar to use within an environment that can often be filled with a lot of unfamiliar / scary equipment. The team try to use lots of open-ended craft packs to encourage children to use their imagination as well as cater to a wide range of ages. The craft packs are used at all times, day and night, by all ages - sometimes we even encourage parents to have a go!

Bubbles are another fantastic opportunity for the staff to engage and distract the children. Bubbles encourage children to focus on breathing and can also assist with different medical assessments such as assessing children's movement in a playful, child-friendly way. The team love using bubbles at triage so, from the moment the children walk in, they know it is a child-friendly place.



**Craft Packs**  
Per year



**Bubbles**  
Per year



**Craft Packs**  
per shift

# The Perfect Team

Phil' Arc UNSW Student Life's involvement with Child Life Therapy has had a considerable impact well beyond their fundraising contribution.

The Phil' team have worked alongside the Child Life Therapy team, understanding what the children experience with anxiety and stress within the Hospital and creating events such as the "Fun-A-Thon" and "Dares for Donations" that encourages the students to step out of their comfort zone and take on confronting and daunting challenges, much like the children they're raising vital funds for.





# THANK YOU

On behalf of Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation, Emergency Department Child Life Therapist, Music Therapist, Child Life and Music Therapy Department, patients and families we would like to express our sincere gratitude for all your efforts in raising the funds to make a difference.

We could not provide expert care to our patients without the generosity of community groups and organisations such as Phil' Arc UNSW Student Life - your support is making an immeasurable impact to sick and injured children and young people throughout NSW and beyond.

