

PRESCRIPTION

FOR: AGE: DATE:

ADDRESS:

R_x

Prescribing
Happiness

LABEL

NOSUBSTITUTION

REPEAT

1

2

3

4

5

SIGNATURE



For more information on Make-A-Wish Singapore, to refer a patient, or to organise an outreach presentation at your organisation, please contact programmeservices@makeawish.org.sg or call **6334 9474**.

SMA and the SMA Charity Fund support volunteerism among our profession. SMA News provides charitable organisations with complimentary space to publicise their causes. To find out more, email news@sma.org.sg. Visit the SMA Cares webpage at <https://www.sma.org.sg/smacades>

Prescribing happiness is an important adjunct to medical treatment. As *Reader's Digest* has been telling us for close to a century, laughter really is the best medicine! Scientists have proven that even the anticipation of a funny movie results in increased amounts of circulating endorphins and growth hormone, which help boost the immune system and reduces stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These effects begin before the movie, continue during the movie and are maintained even after!





MAKE-A-WISH FOUNDATION

It is well accepted that happier children heal faster. Being happy improves their willingness to comply with treatment protocols, boosts their response to treatment and positively impacts their physical and mental health.

Don't worry, I am not about to suggest that all of us go for consults in a clown suit to make our patients laugh, but one such organisation that is ever ready to bring happiness and joy into our patients' lives is Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Make-A-Wish Foundation is usually introduced to children at a difficult and frightening time in their lives – when a serious illness or medical condition that requires treatment and even threatens their survival is surfaced. In the midst of all this despair, the opportunity to “make a wish” allows a ray of sunshine, a more positive outlook, and even hope and encouragement to enter a child's life.

I first encountered Make-A-Wish during my fellowship training in paediatric neurosurgery in New York. One of my patients, a five-year-old girl from the Philippines, was recovering from brain tumour surgery. Wish granters from the New York Chapter of Make-a-Wish visited her to plan her wish, which was to visit Disney World in Florida. Over the next few weeks, as her trip drew closer, I could see how increasingly excited she became. I will

never forget the smiles on the faces of my patient and her family when they left for the airport!

When a wish is granted, it is truly a powerful dose of happiness for the sick child and the family. For once, the child gets to decide what would truly make him or her happy – it could be becoming a princess, meeting dinosaurs or even saving the world as Batman. Families are drawn closer together, giving them the opportunity to forget the illness, even for just a while, and to celebrate life just like a normal family would.

In fact, the healing power of a wish goes far beyond the wish experience. Wish granters, family and friends feel equally blessed to have been part of the wish. Many wish kids, who are now adults, share that their Make-A-Wish experience empowered them to take back control of their lives and to take up challenges they once thought were impossible, such as being wish-granters themselves!

MAKE IT PART OF YOUR PATIENT'S TREATMENT

With the large number of cases that we handle every day and the limited time with our patients, it is often difficult to remember to refer medically eligible children to Make-A-Wish. This is why it is so important to ensure that your whole team is working together to look after the child's emotional well-being. Nurses and medical social workers, who spend the most time with the child and parents, can play a key role in the referral process.

Invite Make-A-Wish to give a presentation to your team during a continuing medical education (CME) session to build awareness and to understand how easy it is to refer a child. Then include Make-A-Wish as one of the many resources available to support children who have a severe or life-threatening medical condition.

ARE YOUR PATIENTS ELIGIBLE?

The eligibility criteria is simple – every child who is a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident, aged three to 18 years, diagnosed with a severe

PROFILE



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY

DR KEITH GOH

Dr Keith Goh is Chairman of the Board of Make-A-Wish Foundation (Singapore). He is also a neurosurgeon in private practice who specialises in paediatric neurosurgery. Dr Goh believes in the healing power of a wish coming true.

Legend

1. "I wish to be a race car driver", Evan Tan, 6, Burkitt's lymphoma.
2. "I wish to have a room makeover", Faye Lim, 16, glutaric acidmia and choreoathetoid cerebral palsy

or life-threatening medical condition (ie, progressive, degenerative or malignant), can be referred.

Cancer, organ failures (eg, heart, lung, liver and kidney) and neurological conditions (eg, muscular dystrophy and epilepsy) are common conditions that Make-A-Wish beneficiaries suffer from. These conditions, contrary to common misconceptions, are not always terminal.

With Make-A-Wish in Singapore, prescribing happiness is such an easy step to include into our treatment protocols. Its benefits will go a long way in improving the quality of life of our patients and their families, so let's take out our magic wands today! ♦