Children with Cancer in Malawi

UK Registered charity no. 1111112

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Winter 2020-21 Newsletter

A Hard Year for Us All

This time last year we hadn't considered what a pandemic would be like and the terms 'lockdown' and 'R number' weren't in our vocabulary. The NHS was, and again, is under pressure and everyday life in the United Kingdom is challenging to many, especially not being able to see family and friends. Despite all these ongoing challenges, on behalf of the children and team in Malawi, we would like to thank you all for your amazing continued support. We would also especially like to thank our friends at St. Andrews, who are no longer able to meet due to lockdown, yet have continued with their unstinting support for CCM.

In Malawi, the pandemic came a bit later than in Europe but there was much trepidation that a poorly resourced health service would be unable to cope with an influx of patients. Many precautions were taken but, as elsewhere in the world, children with cancer were not significantly affected by Covid-19 and the team manged to treat all the children that came in, despite being short staffed. Dr Chagaluka, Sister Kanwendo and the team are to be congratulated on the extra work they put in to ensure the children were given the best possible treatment.

Children with Cancer in Malawi have continued to support the team in Malawi with chemotherapy drugs, supporting staff salaries, paying for the invaluable blood count machine and the electrolyte machine. In addition we bought extra supplies that were needed during the pandemic and supported the team as always with regular contact.

Rachael, the pharmacist who we support, is doing a very good job in enhancing the safety of making up the chemotherapy drugs and ensuring that stocks are replenished. Hannah Di Lullo and Emily Parsons from the CCM team, together with Sister Kanwendo, have set up a teaching programme for nursing staff using pre-recorded powerpoint presentations (the internet in Malawi doesn't reliably support videoconferencing).

The next few years will be very challenging all over the world, but none more so than in Malawi, as one of its poorest countries.

We Need You More Than Ever

The impact of Covid-19 has affected fundraising by many charities – unfortunately CCM is no exception. Our revenues in 2020 have dipped significantly compared to previous years, which is threatening our ability to sustain support for the team in Blantyre at current levels into the future.

Thank you so much for your critical support through the year, which has continued despite the unpredictable times we find ourselves in. However, now is a time when we need our amazing supporters more than ever, so that we can ensure that the children in Malawi with cancer get the care and support they need.

We would be so grateful if you would tell others about the work we do and encourage them to support us in some way. Details of how to donate or get involved in fundraising, can be found at the end of this Newsletter, as well as details of how you can support us for free when you shop online at Amazon and other well known retailers.

Please keep safe and we wish you all a good Christmas and New Year.

Zikomo Kwambiri.

The CCM Trustees

A Bird's Eye View of Paediatric Oncology in Blantyre

by Dr George Chagaluka

The Paediatric Oncology Unit continues to fulfil its mandate of treating and caring for kids that have childhood cancer.

The beginning of 2020 saw the emergency of COVID-19. Several donors mobilized resources to buy personal protective equipment (PPE) for the ward. The ward is indebted to Children with Cancer in Malawi (CCM) for coming to its rescue during the Global Pandemic. CCM bought drugs, PPEs and various other equipment from India.

Although the pandemic is not yet over, I would like to report that so far the ward has had no reported case of COVID-19. All preventive measures are being religiously followed. I'd like to tell a few of the very positive stories from the Unit this year…

I FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT

Akuzike is 7 years old and diagnosed with nephroblastoma at the age of 2 years. She received chemotherapy and surgery for her

cancer. She was followed up for 5 years. She completed her 5 year follow-up in July 2020. She is now a survivor of nephroblastoma and is pictured with her family and I below.

BLESSED BE THE HAND THAT GIVETH

It has been two years now since CCM donated a Full blood count machine. The machine has been working perfectly. Its reagents are readily available from a local supplier and the supplier is always available when we need him.

Patients who need full blood counts are therefore now able to access the service much earlier and routinely than they could previously.

The machine is operated by Veronica (Laboratory Technologist, pictured above) who follows the standard operating procedures to the book. The machine also helps patients in the main Paediatric ward.

PROBABLY CATCH OF THE YEAR

Rachael Chonzi (pictured below) joined the ward in March 2020 as a Ward Pharmacist. Her main duties are to prepare chemotherapy and manage our chemotherapy inventory. She says the best part of her job is to see the young ones getter better upon receiving her prepared chemotherapy. Her main challenge is the lack of a biosafety cabinet. She prepares chemotherapy on open spaces and, often, she has to work in a tiny space.

HONING STAFF SKILLS

The Ward staff recently had the rare opportunity of honing their resuscitation skills. The Ward conducted an in-house resuscitation training for all its staff. They were taught about on resuscitation of a child, managing coma and convulsion. Every staff member had to demonstrate skills gained during the training.

Give to CCM Free As You Shop

Shop at *smile.amazon*.co.uk and Amazon will donate to CCM, at no cost to you. Just register CCM as your chosen charity on the site.

Use easyfundraising to shop online at stores including Argos, M&S, Ebay & Booking.com. The retailer will donate to CCM, free to you - just nominate us as your charity.

Fundraise or Get Sponsored

Anyone can use 'CAF' to raise money for CCM through online sponsorship, or to donate. It's free for charities (aside from credit card charges). So, if you're thinking of doing a fun run, climbing a mountain or any other sponsored challenge, head over to https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/12935#!/DonationDetails and raise money for CCM. Every penny will come directly to us.

Donate

You can donate at: www.childrenscancermalawi.org/donate or by post at: Children with Cancer in Malawi, 39 Reid Park Road, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 2ER, United Kingdom.