



Patient Stories

Sorphea's Fight Against Sepsis

Baby Norak's First Days

Sorphea's* Fight Against Sepsis

Ten year old Sorphea* was born into a big family of six children. Residing in rural Battambang province, Sorphea's parents work hard as potato and corn pickers for a local farmer, in order to support the family. Only Sorphea and her brother are lucky enough to go to school, whilst the two eldest brothers have stopped school so that they can work alongside their parents to help to make ends meet. The younger two children are pre-school aged and come along with the parents and older brothers to the fields every day.

One day, last October, Sorphea came home from school and complained to her mother that her right leg was sore. She could see that Sorphea's leg was swollen but did not take her to hospital immediately because she could not see any injury on the leg. After two days, when Sorphea was still complaining of her sore leg, she took her to the local health center where they told her that Sorphea had a sprain. They gave her some injections and said to return if it did not improve.

Sorphea's condition continued to get worse, so her mother decided to take her to a private clinic instead. The doctors shuffled Sorphea from one unit to another and finally diagnosed her with pneumonia. The clinic demanded a high price for the 'good' medicine to treat Sorphea for pneumonia, which they said was a necessity. Sorphea's mother was doubtful of their claims, and decided to seek another opinion. Sorphea had been once before to Angkor Hospital for Children as a young child, and her mother knew that now that the symptoms were ongoing and appeared serious, that it was time to make the journey to Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC).

By the time his mother organized the taxi to drive the family to AHC, three hours away in Siem Reap, Sorphea had been ill for around seven days; both her legs ached, she was breathing quickly and looked pale and exhausted. Upon arrival at AHC she was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and provided oxygen to assist her breathing. Sorphea's symptoms were aching body (especially legs), difficulty urinating, fever and shortness of breath. An initial diagnosis of anemia was made, but after conducting blood tests, the results showed that she had sepsis and urgently required a blood transfusion if she were to survive. The transfusion was given immediately to Sorphea, almost certainly saving her life that day.

The following morning Sorphea underwent a chest and stomach ultrasound and x-rays. The tests showed that she had developed a lung abscess and osteomyelitis in both legs. Osteomyelitis is an infection in the bone, usually caused by staphylococcus bacteria. Surgery was performed to drain the affected area of the bones. Two kinds of antibiotics were then prescribed and Sorphea's condition began to rapidly improve over the coming days.

Sorphea was in the Intensive Care Unit for more than 10 days, and in the hospital for just under a month in total. AHC continued to follow up her condition once she returned home, to ensure her recovery went according to plan.

Sorphea's parents are both very relieved at her return to health, and are appreciative of the quality and compassionate care provided at AHC, that ultimately saved Sorphea's life. Sorphea's mother felt reassured by the kind treatment and information provided to her by the doctors and nurses, despite her not being able to read or write. She says she will never hesitate to bring her children to AHC if any of them fall ill again.

*Names have been changed to protect patient confidentiality.

Images used in this publication may not be of actual patients referred to in the story.

Baby Norak's* First Days



Norak* was born at the Royal International Hospital in Siem Reap in last November and is the first child born to his parents, who are gold sellers at the local market in Thmokol District in Battambang province. Norak's mother's pregnancy seemed to go smoothly; she had regular prenatal check-ups at the Royal International Hospital and doctors did not notice any problems with the baby's development. Closer to the birth, it was decided that Norak's mother would have a cesarean birth, due to her lower levels of amniotic fluid, which can result in complications in natural birth. Norak's mother was of course concerned, but fortunately the birth went without incident and Norak at first seemed fine and healthy.

However, around 6 hours after delivery, doctors noticed that Norak had difficulty breathing, and he was soon diagnosed with a congenital diaphragmatic hernia, a birth defect of the diaphragm that had developed in the womb where his intestine went through his left lung.

As Royal International Hospital were not equipped to deal with this condition, Norak was transferred by ambulance to Angkor Hospital for Children where he was admitted to AHC's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and quickly put on a ventilator to assist him to keep breathing.

After one night in the NICU, Norak was admitted for surgery to remove his intestine from his lung. The operation took four hours and was, happily, a success. Post-surgery, Norak was put back on the ventilator and also an intravenous drip for nutrition, hydration, and a steady supply of antibiotics.

After 19 days he was able to breathe on his own and was transferred to the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU). Within another week, he was drinking milk and breathing normally again. He was discharged to the care of his family and returned to AHC for a follow up one week later, when the doctors said Norak was doing well and will likely not experience any breathing problems in the future.

Norak's mother was very worried about her son's surgery. But she says the doctors took time to clearly explain his condition and the procedure and was comforted by the high quality equipment being used by medical staff and how much the staff cared about their patients. She would like to thank the doctors and nurses for their hard work and well-coordinated treatment. She says that without this standard of care, Norak would not be alive today.

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