



GOOD WORK

## Peng Haiying Lights A Path For Children With Cancer

The CEO of Children's Cancer Foundation builds alliances so that recipients can continue to get the best care.



By **Adora Wong**

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Peng Haiying has held positions in various non-profit organisations for over two decades.  
Photo: Mun Kong.

A prevalent misconception is that childhood cancer can be inherited. But studies show that 95 percent of occurrences manifest spontaneously, with largely unidentified triggers and limited preventive measures. There is no known cause.

In Singapore, an average of 127 new childhood cancer cases are diagnosed each year. To help improve the quality of life of children with cancer, social service agency Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) offers financial help, educational support, and a range of psychosocial services. It employs a biopsychosocial-spiritual approach, which means it considers the unique biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors that influence each child's experience and clinical outcome.

At the helm is Peng Haiying, who is well-acquainted with tackling complex social issues. Prior to coming on board in 2020, she held positions in non-profit organisations that work with family violence, addiction counselling, and children with disabilities and trauma. The child of a doctor who offered free medical services in a poverty-stricken area, she spent her adolescence knocking on neighbours' doors and urging them to visit the clinic if they felt unwell.

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She'd planned to follow in her father's footsteps, but found herself with misgivings while in medical school. "I told my parents I was more interested in helping people with their emotional and psychological needs," she recounts.

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**"My dad said, 'If you do not heal lives, you can heal hearts. It's equally important.' So, I switched my course of study to social work and haven't looked back since."**

Peng Haiying recapitulates a major turning point in her life

As CEO, Peng guides a team of 80 staff members and volunteers and steers the ship through rough waters. Financial sustainability, for example, is one of CCF's biggest challenges. When the organisation was unable to hold its flagship fundraising event Hair for Hope during the height of the pandemic, it had to think outside the box to diversify

funding streams. This led to the launch of Hope Train, an online fundraising campaign that drives childhood cancer awareness and raises funds from the public.

Another uphill battle is in securing collaboration. “To be an effective problem solver, we must build alliances that help us tackle the different sides of a problem,” says Peng. “How can we have better partnerships so that our recipients can continue to get the best care available?” is the question we constantly ask ourselves.”

CCF has served approximately 3,700 children over the past three decades and currently operates in two hospitals. In addition to supporting patients, it facilitates survivors’ integration back into the community through a schooling programme: Place for Academic Learning and Support is an educational centre that prepares students for integration back into school, offering a holistic curriculum for students from Nursery 1 to Secondary 5 in an infection-controlled environment.



Because of the arduous treatment process, children with cancer usually undergo high stress levels, and consequently, behavioural changes—chemotherapy side effects include fatigue, bleeding, hair loss, and predisposition to infection. The agony usually extends to their families as well; parents suffer additional financial burdens while siblings are affected by a flurry of changes.

We can show them our support by simply chipping in. “One of the easiest ways to show care is to donate to CCF. This ensures that we can continue providing patients with interventions,” says Peng. If you would like to contribute, the Christmas edition of Hope Train 2023 is now live. The goal is to raise \$700,000 by the last day of the year.

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