

“Because We Love Our Children”

Viva Foundation for Children with Cancer

Viva – A Cause Close to the Heart

Viva was born to provide a bridge for the transfer of knowledge and expertise from St Jude’s to Singapore and the region to save children with cancer. Special mention is made to Professor Ching-Hon Pui who has contributed extensively to the conceptualization of Viva. Professor Pui has a long track record of helping children with cancer and their physicians in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan through the International Outreach Program of St Jude.

St Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, USA St Jude’s was founded with the aim of aiding “the poor and the weak” and is the first hospital to cure childhood leukemia. It is not only the sole National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center for Children in the US but has partnered with many facilities in developing countries all over the world to help underprivileged children with cancer, with the assistance of over one million volunteers. As a charity, St Jude’s would be able to extend its good work to Singapore only with philanthropic support. Viva was set up to facilitate the translation of the wonderful work at St Jude’s into Singapore and the whole region.

Fund-Raising for Viva

Singapore was recently rocked by a scandal involving a charitable organization. As a result of this, public confidence was shaken and many locals experienced “donor fatigue”. As a result, Viva refrained from retail fund-raising, preferring instead to rely on entrepreneurial efforts.

Viva’s target was to raise S\$16 million over the course of 3 years. Viva, to date, has raised about S\$11.5 million, out of which S\$5 million is for the Children’s Cancer Center to be established at

Summary of St Jude-Viva Program

Singapore aims to be center of excellence

2 platforms

- Education and Training
- Translational research

3 Focus areas

- Childhood leukaemias
- Cellular therapy
- Sarcomas

- Education of doctors, nurses and allied health
- St Jude-Asia Forum
- Viva Fellowship Program
- Viva Nurse Training Program
 - Certification in Pediatric Oncology Nursing
 - Clinician Nurse Specialists
 - Leukemia, SCT, Solid tumours
- Education
- Outreach training

NUH, S\$3 million is for the Mrs Lee Kong Chian Memorial Chair for Advanced Clinical and Translational Research in Childhood Leukemia and Cellular Therapy, and S\$3.5 million is for various programs including the training of doctors and nurses. Viva’s understanding with NUH is that NUH will take over the operational costs of the center in five years or earlier three if it can break even.

How is Viva Different from Other Children’s Charities?

Viva recognizes and acknowledges the good work done by other organizations such as Children’s Cancer Foundation, Leukemia Lymphoma Society and Singapore Cancer Society. These organizations provide psychological, social and welfare support to patients and their families. It has been estimated that the treatment cost for a child could cost up to S\$150,000. What will save the children’s lives is “pure science and hard medicine”. Viva was therefore conceptualized as a national organization, meant to harness all the energies and resources of related organizations, with the singular objective of exponentially increasing the cure rate of childhood cancer starting with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common childhood cancer. Viva may be viewed as the “glue” or the “sheep dog” that herds all the available resources from the different organizations—be they private or public or philanthropic enterprise to a centralized place. It is hoped that Viva’s work will have a multiplier effect or ripple effect for the whole region.

For a start, Viva is working with NUH to build the infrastructure, which will enhance Singapore’s position as a world class centre for medical treatment, clinical research and training. As the physical structure is being put in place, efforts are being mobilized to train doctors and nurses. At the St Jude-Asia Forum, attendance was 240 professionals from 28 countries. It is the largest gathering of world leaders in leukemia in the recent years. At the opening of the forum, 8 embassies and 1 trade representative office have responded with representation at the forum. Viva’s work is meant to be inclusive and not exclusive and so hopes to work with other organizations like K K Women’s & Children’s Hospital that cater to children with cancer.

Additionally, Viva hopes to mobilize volunteers to provide service that corresponds to or taps on their level of professional expertise. It is worth noting that at St Jude’s volunteers provide such quality service to the organization that it is comparable to or supercedes paid professional service. 🌐