

MEDIA RELEASE

7 August 2021

NUH'S SMALLEST SURVIVING BABY DISCHARGED WELL TO HOME

14-month-old Yu Xuan was born prematurely at 212 grams and is possibly the world's lightest baby born and discharged well on record

Singapore — Kwek Yu Xuan is a 14-month-old infant who had undergone and survived an incredible life battle when she first came into the world. Born prematurely at 212 grams on 9 June 2020, in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this small and fragile baby had a limited chance of survival. Against the odds, with health complications present at birth, she has inspired people around her with her perseverance and growth, which makes her an extraordinary “COVID-19” baby – a ray of hope amid turmoil.

Yu Xuan's parents, Mr Kwek Wee Liang and Mdm Wong Mei Ling (Mrs Kwek), are Singapore permanent residents working in Singapore. They had initially intended to deliver Yu Xuan in Malaysia and reunite with their first child, a four-year-old residing in Malaysia. However, due to preeclampsia (high blood pressure during pregnancy), Mrs Kwek was admitted to the National University Hospital (NUH) and underwent emergency caesarean section at 24 weeks and 6 days of gestation instead of the average 40 weeks. Yu Xuan was admitted in the NUH neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and remained there for 13 months, making her the longest staying baby there. Her stay in the NICU was not always smooth sailing. Yu Xuan had to rely on multiple treatments and machines for survival, and she responded positively to the medical care and treatment. She was active, cheerful and responsive during her hospitalisation at NICU where staff from the Department of Neonatology of Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI), NUH, took care of her and monitored her condition round the clock.

Now, Yu Xuan has grown to about 6.3kg and was discharged well on 9 July 2021. Yu Xuan's health and development have been progressing well with the unconditional support from her parents as well as the larger community and donors. She currently has chronic lung disease and pulmonary hypertension – two conditions commonly associated with extreme prematurity. She is expected to get better with time.

Mrs Kwek benefited from the Ronald McDonald House at NUH, which provides caregivers and families of young patients a temporary place of respite closer to their children at no cost. She was able to work remotely on her computer while at the hospital during Yu Xuan's hospitalisation.

Mrs Kwek said: “We are very grateful to the doctors and nurses of the NUH NICU team for the attentive and wonderful medical care and treatment of Yu Xuan. In addition, we would like to express our thanks to the crowdfunding platform and donors, as well as our relatives, friends, colleagues and the landlord of our residence for their care and encouragement.”

Associate Professor Zubair Amin, Head and Senior Consultant, Department of Neonatology, KTP-NUCMI, NUH, said: “The NICU team is thankful to Yu Xuan’s family for the trust that they have placed in us to care for Yu Xuan. It was a difficult journey for Yu Xuan and we greatly appreciate the concerted effort and benevolent support from our colleagues, donors as well as the larger community who have contributed to her survival and growth. This was a team effort that embodies the spirit of care and compassion.”

Based on the Tiniest Babies Registry managed by The University of Iowa (<https://webapps1.healthcare.uiowa.edu/TiniestBabies/index.aspx>), Yu Xuan is possibly the world’s lightest baby born and discharged well to home. The previous smallest survivor in the world was born 245 grams in the United States as reported by BBC in May 2019 ('World's smallest' surviving premature baby released from US hospital <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48458780>).

NUH Home Equipment Loan Programme

The Kwek family also received assistance from the NUH Home Equipment Loan Programme, which was introduced in August 2020. The programme aims to help families who are unable to afford medical equipment that is critical to their children’s needs for home treatment. The medical equipment, with formal training provided on its use, is loaned to beneficiaries for free, for the duration of the child’s need. Funded through seed funding from the NUH Productivity and Innovation Fund and further augmented by the generosity of donors including former caregivers and families of patients, the loan programme has benefited eight families so far including Yu Xuan, and it is expected to help more young patients and their families.

Under the programme, the Kweks received an oxygen concentrator, home ventilator and oxygen saturation monitor, and other ancillary equipment to help support Yu Xuan for as long as she needs.

Chinese Glossary

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About the National University Hospital

The National University Hospital is a tertiary hospital and major referral centre with over 50 medical, surgical and dental specialties, offering a comprehensive suite of specialist care for adults, women and children. It is the only public hospital in Singapore to offer a paediatric kidney and liver transplant programme, in addition to kidney, liver and pancreas transplantation for adults.

The hospital was opened on 24 June 1985 as Singapore’s first restructured hospital. Each year, the Hospital attends to more than one million patients.

As an academic health institution, patient safety and good clinical outcomes are the focus of the Hospital. It plays a key role in the training of doctors, nurses, allied health and other healthcare professionals. Translational research is pivotal in the Hospital’s three-pronged focus, and paves the way for new cures and treatment.

A member of the National University Health System, it is the principal teaching hospital of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the NUS Faculty of Dentistry.