



Family Care Project

Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital
Project Update November 2022



PROJECT OVERVIEW

As a specialist paediatric facility, most of the children seen at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH) suffer from complex health issues that require ongoing and intensive treatment, sometimes lasting months, even years. In addition to the physical and emotional stress of having a chronically ill or injured child, this can place a huge financial burden on the patient's family or primary caregivers. The Social Work Department unfortunately get to hear firsthand about the harsh realities facing parents and primary caregivers, many of whom live in impoverished and unsafe communities, are unemployed and are solely dependent on care grants to support their children and extended families.

With the costs of living and transport continuing to increase, the Hospital is finding that many more families are unable to afford basic items required for their child's health, optimal recovery and overall well-being, including access to regular (and nutritious) meals, clothing, educational support, hygiene and care items and transport to appointments. The Family Care Project supports the Hospital's Social Work Department to provide vulnerable patients and their families with temporary emergency relief to help them on their road to recovery.

So far, over 5000 patients and their families have benefited from this project since it was launched in January this year.



Every little one counts





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Geraldine's Story

How a little kindness can go a long way

Geraldine is a shy yet happy girl of ten. She and her aunt, Marietjie, have made their way from Beaufort West for an appointment at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital Cerebral Palsy (CP) Clinic. Her appointment is in preparation for a big operation planned for March next year. The little girl has been coming to the Hospital since she was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy as an infant. This debilitating neurological disorder affects a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture: Geraldine is wheelchair bound and has ongoing issues with her hip and leg and struggles with her speech.

The two had to leave Beaufort West at 4am in order to get to their 9am appointment at the Hospital's CP clinic. Staff at the clinic are efficient, and her examination and appointment are concluded by 12h30. However, Marietjie soon finds out that because it is a Friday, the next available transport back to Beaufort West is only on Monday. They will have to spend the weekend at the Hospital. Usually, Geraldine would come with her adopted mother, however she is currently unwell. And Marietjie isn't prepared for this at all! She has no change of clothing or underwear for either of them, no toiletries or extra nappies for Geraldine. She is also worried about how she will afford food for the weekend.



"Geraldine was adopted by her uncle (my brother) and his partner when both her biological parents passed away. Her (adoptive) mom makes sure she takes very good care of Geraldine and only wants the best for her. They are excited about the operation next year. But they are both unemployed and depend on the R1990 disability grant money. They struggle a lot. Her granny, who is a pensioner, assists whenever she can with nappies – but that is not always the case," Marietjie tells us.

Marietjie was referred to the Hospital's Social Work Department, and housing was arranged for the weekend at the Hospital's Parent's Accommodation. In addition, thanks to the Family Care Project, they received an essential care pack to help sustain them through the weekend – this included a change of clothing, underwear, toiletries and disposable nappies. Marietjie was also given a food parcel to take home with her to the family. This contains essential non-perishable items that can provide nutritional support for the family for up to 2 weeks.

Now, lying on the bed at their Parent's Accommodation at the Hospital, Geraldine fidgets with her hands trying to grip the colouring page on her chest. Her eyes gleam as she looks across at her Auntie. The two share a moment as Marietjie strokes the little girl's hair. Geraldine smiles. "She loves it when I stroke her hair," Marietjie says. "And while it's a bit lonely here in Cape Town, and there are a lot of worries, I feel good being here as everyone is so patient and kind. I am very grateful for everything being done for me and my niece."

Since the beginning of 2022, The Family Care Project has so far helped over 5000 patients and families who, just like Geraldine's, require temporary material assistance in order to give their little ones the best opportunity to heal and thrive.



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Thanks to the generous support of all who have donated to this project, over 5000 patients and their families have been provided with material aid since the start of this project in January this year. Beneficiaries include:

Nutritional support



1489 food parcels have been provided to children at high risk of malnourishment, or with special high-cost dietary requirements related to their diagnosis (e.g. diabetes), or awaiting approval of their care grant application. Families will not receive multiple parcels unless under exceptional circumstances approved by the Head of Social Work. To ensure continued and sustained support for the child, the social worker will, as part of their counselling, connect the family with food relief organisations within their community.

1555 snack packs (which includes water, savoury biscuits, cheese and a fruitstick) have been provided to selected outpatients who will be spending almost the entire day at the hospital (some can be there for up to 10 hours depending on their treatment needs). For many, this will be the only meal they'll have that day.

Emergency care items



1 219 hygiene packs and 736 underwear and clothing packs have been provided to patients and their families who are vulnerable or have experienced severe trauma. In addition, the Social Work Department has the unfortunate responsibility of recommending the temporary removal of a child due to serious safety and child protection risks. Sadly, this affects up to 20 children (0 to 12/13 years) per month. This project enables them to leave the hospital with a 'Placement care pack', which includes a change of clothes, toy or comfort bear, change of nappies, baby milk or bottle (as breastfeeding is no longer an option), blanket and toiletries.

"Recommending the removal of a child is a traumatic and life changing decision for the child, the parent, the prospective caretaker, all the social work staff and health care workers. However, for the actual child, it is the most difficult. Imagine been taken from the only parent you know and your home (regardless of the circumstances). Older children describe to us it is such a sad and confusing time. The child enters the hospital sick. Their physical illnesses may be healed but the emotional impact continues. Children lose everything in that moment in their lives. Temporary removals of any child, even though it is done in pursuit of safe care and protection for the child, is devastating. By providing the 'Placement Care Pack' to all children who are temporarily removed from their parents, is a wonderful and generous show of the love and care for the children we serve. I cannot emphasize my team's gratitude to the Trust for trying to make the transition of the child into alternative temporary safe care a little easier. THANK YOU!!! Bless the work you do and all the donors who makes this care project possible." Carla Brown, Head of Social Work, RCWMCH

Transport assistance



1316 patients and their caregivers have received a financial contribution to alleviate the burden of transport costs for patients requiring follow up treatments and/or relocation to places of safety. The amount provided is a once off contribution to overall transport costs and is based on a thorough assessment of the families socioeconomic situation in relation to the child's treatment needs. Only in very high-risk situations will a family receive ongoing transport support.



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Our heartfelt and sincere appreciation extends to each and every one of our loyal donors for your ongoing and continued financial support.



Financial Report

	Budget year 1	Expenditure Jan-Oct
Food and Care Items	R922 200	R612 441
Transport funds	R126 000	R65 000
Operational costs	R229 400	R132 812
Total	R1 277 600	R810 253



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