

## **Introduction of “Leave Board” and its Effect**

- The Leave Board “Sunshine Village” is the proof of children’s great effort -

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### **I . Introduction**

Children come and go everyday for examinations and surgery to our circulatory organ department. Many are repeatedly hospitalized. No matter how many times they have been hospitalized, children and families seem to feel anxious every time when the admission day comes up.

Their anxiety and nervousness toward a surgery and hospitalization could be alleviated if they were aware that they had overcome the same procedure before. To do this, I would like to visualize children’s efforts to encourage them. I made a big tree from cardboard for children to place their own cards on the tree and to bring them back when they went back home.

However, there were too many children for one HPS to handle on the ward. A wise manager of the ward suggested placing a “leave board” instead of the paper tree in order to retain the original idea and to operate it efficiently. The idea was that children put a mark on the “leave board” on the day when they were going back home, indicating their completion of the treatment in the hospital: “I did it!” “ I overcame the whole procedure!”. It was also designed to encourage children including times when they had to come back to the hospital.

To make the “leave board” familiar for children, it was named “Sunshine Village” in a conference. The idea was well accepted and it was decided to introduce it to other departments of the hospital as well. It has been over a year since the “leave board” was officially placed in the pediatric ward. This is a report of a survey regarding the “leave board” implemented for the children, their families and healthcare staff in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the board at the moment.

### **II . Objectives**

Since January 2010, the “leave board” has been placed in a general ward of the Circulatory Organ Center. Children were instructed to choose their own mark and to place it on the board when they were going back home after their hospitalization.

In this report, the meaning and effectiveness of the board were studied through conducting a survey of children, families and healthcare staff. Current issues and future challenges were also reviewed and discussed.

### **III. Method**

1. Subjects : 85 children who went home after staying in the ward, and their families, 25 nurses and 14 doctors.
2. Period of Study : From April 2011 to December 2011
3. Method :
  - 1) For children and their families: Children and families were asked to complete a questionnaire sheet and bring it back to the hospital after filling it out on a voluntary basis. A collection box was placed at the out-patient entrance.
  - 2) For healthcare staff: A questionnaire sheet was given directly to staff. After filling it out they were instructed to put in the collection bag.
4. Survey content: Differing types of questionnaires were prepared for children/families, medical

practitioners (doctors), and nurses respectively (Appendix 1 ~3)

#### IV. Result

35 out of 85 (41%) children and families completed and submitted the questionnaire. Of those who returned the questionnaire, 23 children (66%) were before school age and 12 (34%) were older. 60% of children had a history of previous hospitalization. Among healthcare professionals, 31 people answered the questionnaire (9 doctors and 22 nurses).

Regarding marking on the board, 94 % of children and families answered “good idea” even those who had to stay on the hospital for treatments or a surgery. In the free answer section, there were many positive comments such as “It is encouraging to see that many people have been here and eventually went home (12 y/o child)”, “It visually makes children feel that their life in the hospital is over (a parent of 8 y/o)”, “It is nice because it tells that we did it all together. It is encouraging as being in hospital isn’t easy for everyone (a parent of both 1 y/o and 8 y/o who had been in hospital)”, “I was filled with the sense of fulfillment (a parent of 0 y/o)”, “My child was happy for that (a parent of 5 y/o)”. There was a family saying “We put a mark beside the one that we had put in the previous time (family of 3 y/o)”.

Regarding the questionnaire for healthcare staff, though just 55% of doctors acknowledged the “leave board”, there were some positive comments such as “It brings a sense of happiness and achievement”, “I feel happy when I see sheep and flowers on the board gradually increasing because that shows a number of children who got well and went home finally”, “The continuation of this activity shall encourage families and healthcare staff a lot”. Most of all, all respondents agreed with the continuation of the “leave board” hooray.

All nurses responded “I felt relieved when I saw children leaving their marks on the board”, “It feels nice”, “Children seemed very content”. There were many other comments in the free answer section including this one: “I’m always swamped with work, but when I see the board showing that so many children went home from this hospital, I feel a sense of fulfillment at the same time”.



Pic. 1 . Leave Mark (Choose one and put it on the board)



Pic.2. Leave Board



Pic. 3. Father and daughter placing a mark together



Pic.4. Names and comments are also written on the board

## V. Discussion

Once a child is ready for going home, healthcare staff congratulate the child. Then he/she chooses a mark from a box and puts it on the “leave board”. Three objectives of the “leave board” are as follows:

- (1) To make children aware of their efforts during the period of hospitalization by placing their own mark (a child can choose from either sheep or a flower) on the board.
- (2) To encourage and to reduce anxiety of children and their families when they are first admitted to the hospital.
- (3) To provide a sense of fulfillment and happiness to healthcare professionals.

Under the “leave board” located outside the corridor on the ward, there were often children and their families talking happily about where they should put their mark on the board. Younger children were carried by a parent and put the mark on their favorite place. It was as if they were sharing the sense of their achievement together. For children who were too small to put his/her mark on by him/herself, their older siblings often place it on behalf of their younger siblings. When staff told them “thank you for your corporation”, they smiled shyly.

Such moments told us that siblings are also having an important part of the whole picture.

It was often seen that the whole family took a photograph in front of the board. A family whose child was required to be hospitalized sometime later said “We’ll be back” and children who waved at us by saying “good bye” with a happy smile indicated they had at least positively accepted their experiences of the hospitalization.

Since the board was placed in front of the waiting room, children saw the board while waiting for administrative procedures. Some of the children even requested “I want my mark to be the sheep when I go home” as soon as they were admitted to the ward. In the questionnaire, a family whose child had to stay in hospital again wrote that they could tell the child “You did it before, so way don’t you this time?”. Though children get nervous when they are admitted to the hospital, they are looking forward to placing their own mark on the board. By having seen behaviors of children and families who have used the board, it has demonstrated that the board has fulfilled its objectives.

A patient suffering from cardiovascular disease is often required to undergo a surgery after hospitalization for routine tests and catheterization. For children who face such situations, play preparation, distractions during treatments and a stamp rally game for examinations have been introduced so that they were encouraged and were able to go through the procedure smoothly.

Now when children finally got to go home, they gained a sense of achievement by seeing their efforts on “Sunshine Village”. In addition, for those who had to stay in the hospital again in the future, it reduced their anxiety and provided courage to go through it again.

In the questionnaire for healthcare professionals, some useful advice and ideas were also seen including “It may be a good idea to divide it into age groups. It can be encouraging for families of babies to see other babies’ marks” “How about showing a monthly result?”

It has been over three years since the “leave board” was introduced. The monthly result, requested by one of healthcare professionals, started from this year. In a mark and on the board, children and families can write their names and comments for encouragement to other children. It has provided evidence that children, family and healthcare staff encourage each other and work together. To have a medical environment that respects children’s needs is our continuous challenge and is definitely on its way.

## Reference

Kazuaki Sugiura (Ed.) (2003) *Introductory of Clinical Psychology*. Chuohoki Press.



## Suwa region : Introduction of “Leave Board” and its Effect

## Appendix 2 : Evaluation on the Leave Board (The Sunshine Village) For doctors

1. Have you seen that children or their families placed a mark on the Leave Board?  

• YES• NO
  
2. Do you have any particular feeling when you see the board as a medical practitioner?  

• YES (In detail: \_\_\_\_\_)• NO
  
3. Do you agree with the continuation of the Leave Board?  

• YES• NO Reason (\_\_\_\_\_)
  
4. Please write any comment on the “Leave Board (The Sunshine Village)”.



Thank you for your cooperation

## Appendix 3 : Evaluation on the Leave Board (The Sunshine Village) For nurses

1. Did you give a mark to a patient when he/she was leaving the hospital?  
• YES                      • NO
2. What did you feel when you handed it to the patient?  
  
• Relieved              • Content              • Glad the patient was discharged  
• Nothing in particular              • Other (In detail: \_\_\_\_\_ )
3. How did you feel when you saw the reactions of the patient (when he/she was choosing their mark, when they were placing their mark on the board)?  
  
• Relieved              • Content              • Glad the patient was discharged  
• Nothing in particular              • Other (In detail: \_\_\_\_\_ )
4. Do you have any particular feeling when you see the board as a healthcare professional?  
• YES (In detail: \_\_\_\_\_ )              • NO
5. Do you agree with the continuation of the Leave Board?  
• YES                      • NO              Reason ( \_\_\_\_\_ )
6. Please write any comment on the “Leave Board (The Sunshine Village)”.



Thank you for your cooperation