



burma children medical fund

BCMF | Operating to give Burma's kids a future

July-September 2012 Three Month Summary



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Overview

The third quarter of 2012 has continued to be busy for BCMF. We have seen a total of 35 new patients, averaging more than 10 per month. Additionally, BCMF has had a total of 316 follow-up visits from existing patients this quarter. These included patients enrolled in each of our programs: the Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF), the Burma Adult Medical Fund (BAMF), and the Burma Women Medical Fund (BWMF). The new cases presented this quarter vary greatly and have included cardiac disease, hydrocephalus, Hirschsprung's disease, and patients presenting with abdominal masses.

While the political situation in Burma is gradually changing, access to medical care in Burma continues to be severely limited. In reality, the political changes in Burma have meant very little in the lives of ordinary Burmese, particularly in relation to health care. Although Burma's government has announced it will increase spending on health care in 2012, the rise will only bring total annual spending on health care to slightly more than two percent of the country's budget, keeping Burma among the world's lowest countries in terms of total money allocated to health care. As a result, very little has changed on the ground for BCMF as we continue to see patients coming in large numbers seeking treatment due to the state of the Burmese health system. There are few Burmese hospitals that are able to provide treatment for complex cases, and at those facilities that do offer care, treatment continues to be cost-prohibitive.

In the third quarter, BCMF facilitated 22 van trips from the Mae Tao Clinic (in Mae Sot) to Chiang Mai (360km). Some patients on these vans were going to Chiang Mai for initial investigations, while others were scheduled for surgery or follow-up appointments. In total, 27 BCMF patients underwent surgery in Chiang Mai this quarter. Another 3 BWMF patients underwent surgery in Mae Sot.

There have also been a number of changes here at BCMF. One of our volunteers, Grace Eickmeyer, has left BCMF to take a new job in the Ukraine. We have since brought on two new volunteers—Pari Chowdhary and Samantha Carter—both of whom will start working with BCMF in late September.

July-September 2012: Summary of New Cases

Total number of new cases across the program	35
- Children – Burma Children Medical Fund (BCMF)	13
- Children (under 12) funded by donor in Chiang Mai	13
- Special Adult Cases – Burma Adult Medical Fund (BAMF)	9
- Gynecological Surgery – Burma Women Medical Fund (BWMF)	0

JULY PATIENT SPOTLIGHT: MA LINN AYE



Ma Linn Aye is a 13-year-old girl who was diagnosed with cardiac disease in 2004. Ma Linn Aye's parents moved from Karen State to Mon State to escape the conflict, the high levies that they were required to pay each month to support the war effort, and because they needed to find employment. When life in Mon State also proved to be very difficult, they moved to Thailand.

When Ma Linn Aye was only 4 years of age she was diagnosed with heart disease at the Mae Tao Clinic. However, her parents had to return to Burma before Ma Linn Aye could receive treatment because her grandmother had fallen ill and the family went back to care for her. By the age of 11, Ma Linn Aye was experiencing extreme fatigue, had no interest in eating, and was unable to play with other children. She was forced to repeat the second grade multiple times because she was unable to complete the course curriculum each year due to the complications of her illness.

Ma Linn Aye's parents returned to the Mae Tao Clinic and on July 19, 2012, BCMF sent Ma Linn Aye to Chiang Mai for heart surgery. She was admitted to the hospital for 2 days and stayed at the patient house for 10 days. After surgery, Ma Linn Aye reports that she now has more energy, feels happier, can eat a lot, and sleeps very well. She says that now she wants to eat everything that she sees and is looking forward to going back to school.

Ma Linn Aye's mother said, "Thank you very much for saving my daughter's life. Without your help we could not afford the treatment. May you have a long and successful life. May you be saved from a harmful and dangerous life. Words can't express my gratitude. Thank you very much."

AUGUST PATIENT SPOTLIGHT: MA THEIN KYI



About one and a half years ago Ma Thein Kyi began to experience lower abdominal pain, lower back pain, and pain during sexual intercourse. Though she could still work, her condition caused her severe discomfort. She did not seek care in Burma, as she knew she could not afford the treatment. Her husband accompanied her to Mae Tao Clinic on January 23, 2012, where she was diagnosed with a uterine myoma. Ma Thein

Kyi says at first she was afraid to have surgery, but she knew she would feel happy and be at peace once she could finally live free of pain and discomfort.

Ma Thein Kyi had surgery on July 30, 2012. Ma Thein Kyi said that the doctor and nurses at Mae Sot Hospital were very nice and helpful. Before the surgery, she said that she was very worried and stressed about her health. She felt bad that her condition limited her ability to support her family. During her post-operative interview in August, she now says she feels happier, has more energy, and generally feels healthy. She says she is grateful to have been treated with such kindness by the staff of BCMF and the Mae Tao Clinic. Ma Thein Kyi says, "Thank you very much to the donors and those who helped me with the treatment. Without your help, I could not afford the treatment. Thank you very much for giving me back my happy life."

SEPTEMBER PATIENT SPOTLIGHT: MAUNG WIN OO



In January 2012, four year old Maung Win Oo sustained serious burns when he was playing by the fire. His clothes caught fire, and the fire quickly to his buttocks, perineum, and his legs. He panicked and tried to use his hands to put out the fire, resulting in further severe burns to his fingers. No adults were present when the accident occurred, but a few seconds later, one of the neighbors saw Maung Win Oo and screamed to his mother.

Maung Win Oo's mother brought him to a health care worker in the local village. They cleaned and dressed Maung Win Oo's wounds, gave him an IV infusion, and prescribed medicine. After two months, Maung Win Oo showed some improvement. His parents continued to use herbal and traditional medicine as well as holy water to treat his burns. However, five months after the accident, Maung Win Oo had severe scarring resulting from a combination of skin contractures and wounds. When skin is burned, the surrounding skin begins to pull together, resulting in a contracture which can ultimately restrict movement around the injured area. As a result of these contractures, Maung Win Oo can no longer walk or stand up straight as his knees are fused by scar tissue at 90 degree angles. His fingers are also severely disfigured as a result of the burns and he is unable to grasp objects properly.

Maung Win Oo's father earns a living as a farmer and sells rice, charcoal, and firewood as a means to supplement his income. However, his income is not enough to support the family and sometimes they have to borrow money from friends and relatives. Maung Win Oo's father constantly worries about what the future holds for his son. He and his wife decided that Mae Tao Clinic was their only hope of accessing health care for Maung Win Oo. On September 24, 2012, his parents brought him to Mae Tao Clinic and he was referred to BCMF. Maung Win Oo's father says his greatest wish is for his son to get better so that he will be able to walk like a normal boy again.

URGENT HELP NEEDED!

THAN HTUN OO



Than Htun Oo is a 15-year-old boy suffering from a brain tumor. In July 2012, Than Htun Oo complained of a severe headache and his mother brought him to a local clinic in Burma, where doctors advised them to go to Mawlamyine Hospital for further investigation. However, his parents could not afford the cost of hospitalization. In the absence of affordable alternatives, his parents decided to bring him to Mae Tao Clinic. Mae Tao Clinic staff referred him to Ram Hospital in Mae Sot for a CT scan where he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. As Than Htun Oo's condition has continued to deteriorate, his headaches have gotten worse,

he experiences severe headaches, vomiting, and has developed double-vision. He has also developed palsy, began having problems with balance when walking or standing, and has difficulty understanding simple instructions.

As Than Htun Oo's condition has continued to deteriorate, his mother has had to dedicate all of her time to looking after him and his father had to quit his job in order to help care for the other children. Now, the family has no income and they are relying on relatives to help support them. Than Htun Oo's family is very worried about his health. Than Htun Oo's parents desperately want him to get better. They want him to return to school and to be healthy and strong. BCMF estimates the cost of his treatment will be approximately 250,000 baht. Please consider helping us defray the costs of his treatment so that we can continue to help more patients like him.

Khin Shin Thon



Khin Shinn Thant is an 8-year-old girl suffering from Arteriovenous Malformation (AVM). Khin Shinn Thant's family is originally from Bago Division in Burma. However, her parents moved to Mae Sot, Thailand four years ago in order to find employment while Khin Shinn Thant stayed behind in Burma with her grandparents. Together, her parents earned about 7,500 baht a month (about \$250 U.S.) working in Mae Sot.

Last month, Khin Shinn Thant came home from school and complained of dizziness. She began vomiting and having convulsions. Her grandparents took her to the hospital

where she was admitted and monitored for the next 24 hours. Her parents were notified of Khin Shinn Thant's hospitalization and they came back immediately to see her. Unable to determine the cause of Khin Shinn Thant's illness, doctors recommended her parents take her to Rangoon Hospital for further investigation and treatment.

Khin Shinn Thant was admitted to Rangoon Hospital for 10 days. After a series of tests including a CT scan, angiogram, and blood tests, doctors diagnosed her with Arteriovenous Malformation. Arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are defects in the circulatory system. An AVM is a snarled tangle of arteries and veins and interferes with the blood circulation in a particular organ. AVMs can happen anywhere, but the ones located in the brain or spinal cord can cause seizures or headaches. In total, the tests and hospital stay cost Khin Shinn Thant's family 200,000 Kyat, eating up the family's entire savings and forcing them to sell two cows and some jewelry in order to cover the costs of her hospitalization. Khin Shin Thant's parents had been saving money in order to move back to Burma, but when Khin Shinn Thant became ill, they had to spend all of their savings on her treatment.

Khin Shinn Thant had a follow-up appointment scheduled at Rangoon Hospital on July 11, but her parents could not afford to take her. Instead, they decided to bring her to Mae Tao Clinic. Back in Burma, Khin Shinn Thant says she has three school friends and enjoys jumping rope. She says she wants to go back to school and eventually be a teacher.

Khin Shinn Thant's parents are worried about her and the fact that they have no more money for further treatment. BCMF has already spent 100,000 baht for to cover the cost of a cerebral angiogram in order to clearly identify the location and nature of the AVM. Following the angiogram, doctors ultimately determined that surgical removal of the AVM would be necessary. Khin Shinn Thant's surgery may cost as much as 300,000 baht. Please consider helping us to cover the cost of Khin Shinn Thant's surgery.

IN MEMORIAM: OUR FIGHTERS

ZIN MAR MYINT



Zin Mar Myint was a 21-year-old girl suffering from cardiac disease. A native of Rangoon, Zin Mar Myint first realized she was ill at the age of 14, when she was in the ninth grade. She began to feel tired, especially when she was active. When she went to the doctor, she was informed she had rheumatic heart disease and required an operation that would cost 2,000,000 Kyat. Her family tried to save for the operation, but was unable to collect enough money. In the interim, Zin Mar Myint was taking medication at a cost of 6,000-7,000 Kyat per week. She was hospitalized twice while awaiting surgery.

Without any other options, Zin Mar Myint's uncle advised his sister to take her to the Mae Tao Clinic for treatment. Zin Mar Myint and her mother traveled for two days from Rangoon to the clinic, while Zin Mar Myint's older brother remained behind in Rangoon, taking care of their two younger siblings. Zin Mar Myint hoped that with treatment, she would get better. She wanted to finish her schooling and to one day be able to help support her family. After

coming to Mae Tao Clinic, she was referred to BCMF and scheduled for heart surgery. However, the night before Zin Mar Myint was due to have surgery, she had an aneurysm and died the next day. BCMF would like to remember Zin Mar Myint, her bright smile, and her brave fight.

Ma Thu Zar



Ma thu Zar was a baby girl referred to Mae Tao Clinic when she was two weeks old, after being born with meningocele and hydrocephalus. Meningocele is a form of spina bifida, a condition in which some vertebrae overlying the spinal cord are not fully formed and remain unfused and open. She also had a club foot due to nerve damage resulting from the meningocele. When Ma Thu Zar was born the doctor informed her parents of her multiple health problems and advised them to bring her to the Mae Tao Clinic for treatment.

Both of Ma Thu Zar's parents had moved from a village in Mandalay district eight years ago in order to seek employment in the factories in Mae Sot. They sent part of their income back to Burma in order to help support their parents. Ma Thu Zar is their first child.

Both parents were very concerned about Ma Thu Zar's care and understandably worried about their only daughter's future. They said their only hope was for Ma Thu Zar to get better. Mae Tao Clinic referred Ma Thu Zar to BCMF and BCMF sent her to Chiang Mai in March 2012 in order to have a shunt put in. Shunts are used to treat hydrocephalus by allowing excess cerebrospinal fluid to drain to another area of the body. However, in August 2012, Ma Thu Zar developed an infection and the swelling associated with her hydrocephalus got worse, possibly as a result of a blockage in the shunt. Unfortunately, Ma Thu Zar's condition quickly deteriorated and in September 2012, she developed a severe fever and vomiting and died the next day. BCMF would like to remember this beautiful little girl who represented hope for a better future to both of her parents.

PYINT PYHO



Pyint Phyho was a seven-year-old boy with congenital heart disease. His family used to work as farmers in Burma, but were unable to earn enough to make ends meet, so six years ago, they moved to Thailand. In Thailand, they worked as migrant farmers, helping to cut sugar cane and to farm beans and corn. They earned approximately 200 baht per day. While his parents worked in Thailand, Pyint Phyho was able to attend school for the first time at a local migrant school.

Pyint Phyho's mother says she knew something was wrong with him because he seemed to get easily fatigued and was not growing very well. However, his mother says she did not know that he had a problem with his heart until she decided to bring him to Mae Tao Clinic.

The journey to Mae Tao Clinic was expensive for Pyint Phyho's family due to the costs incurred at police checkpoints. Despite the expense, Pyint Phyho's mother was very hopeful that he would be able to get treatment for his heart condition. She says she understood that he needed an operation that they would not have been able to afford in Burma. Pyint Phyho's mother said that she hoped he would become stronger and healthier in the future. Mae Tao Clinic referred Pyint Phyho to BCMF. In May 2012, BCMF sent Pyint Phyho to Chiang Mai for an initial investigation and angiogram. Doctors scheduled him for open heart surgery in November. However, before he was able to have the surgery, his mother told BCMF staff that he died suddenly in his sleep one night. BCMF would like to remember Pyint Phyho and his brave fight.

July-September 2012: Summary Data

Total number of new cases across the program	35
-Cardiac disease	15
-Abdominal mass	3
-Hirschsprung's disease	2
-Kidney disease	2
-Burn victim	1
-Brain tumor	1
-Goiter	1
-Encephalocele	1
-Pleural effusion	1
-Lymphoma	1
-Ulcerative colitis	1
-Traumatic cataract	1
-Imperforate anus	1
-Meningocele	1
-Neck mass	1
-Eyeball rupture	1
-Hypospadias	1
 Patient's Home State/Division	
-Tak Province	19
-Karen State	8
-Myawaddy	4
-Mon State	3
-Mawlamyine	1
 Total number of patients taken to Chiang Mai for treatment	173
-Total number of patients that had consultations or follow-up treatment	146
-Total number of patients that underwent surgery	27
 Total number of BWMF patients that underwent surgery in Mae Sot	3
 Total number of follow-up visits at BCMF (prior patients)	316
 Total number of patient deaths	3

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