

Winter 2014



Leonardo 11 months old: A ray of hope for the little sunshine

Leonardo has been lying in a hospital cot since his birth, because the boy with the big lively eyes suffers from muscle weakness. He cannot sit up and is dependent on a cannula to support his breathing. This irritates his respiratory tract and it is unpleasant for Leonardo. He is making good progress thanks to intensive physiotherapy and the support of art and expressive therapy, but he will have to stay in hospital for some time still. The bright little boy is severely limited in his natural urge to move and to explore his surroundings and for this reason he is often very restless in his cot. He is now at an age where the variegated stimulation and positive feelings that are provided by art therapy are enormously important for healthy development.

"Leonardo's breathing calms down with the vibration of tones; these are moments of happiness for him, a highlight in his day and his eyes light up."
Tanja Onorato, art therapist

The time with Tanja Onorato, art and expressive therapist at the Children's Hospital at Zurich, provides this important stimulus for him, which at the same time has a calming effect. The senses of listening, seeing, touching and feeling, and his emotional requirements too, are satisfied, while he expresses his feelings in a playful manner and becomes aware of his surroundings in a relaxed and positive atmosphere. Anita C., Leonardo's mother, visits him daily, and at home she takes care of his twin brother and another sibling. "It is a comforting feeling to know that an art therapist is looking after Leonardo, and it is good for both him and me."

5 Years of help for children in hospital

The Art-Therapie foundation makes art, music and dance therapy possible for children, newborn and adolescents in hospital; 2008 in six, today in nine university and cantonal hospitals all over Switzerland. This young charitable foundation has already achieved a great deal. As a pioneer, the foundation is today a leader in its field.

Renowned physicians and health-care professionals are members of the foundation board. They dedicate themselves to achieve one objective: to make these effective gentle types of therapy available to as many small hospital patients as possible. They are an important step on the way to convalescence.

- 1** Foundation for ill children in Swiss hospitals
- 3** Therapy forms: Art, music, dance.
- 5** Years active in all parts of the country
- 9** Founder and partner hospitals in Baden, Basel, Chur, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, St. Gall, Winterthur, Zurich
- 23** Male and female therapists
- 2'500** Small patients in 2012
- 12'000** Patients looked after since 2008

The Red Pencil, Singapore

For the first time our sister organisation is providing disaster relief in the Philippines. The founder and therapist Laurence Vanderborre, is on the spot in the province of Leyte. Two art therapists from The Red Pencil have met up with both of the Red Cross teams from Singapore, in order to take care of severely traumatised children as quickly as possible.

Marie, 14 years old: Out of isolation into the group room



Marie is in the psychiatric department for adolescents in the University Hospital of Lausanne, where she is suffering from severe behavioural disorders. When she arrived, she refused to co-operate at all with the physicians and the healthcare team and did not speak with anyone, either. She remained isolated in her room the whole day long. At first I simply approached her and greeted her in order to establish initial contact. She stayed under her blanket and remained silent. On the second time I asked her if she liked music and which instruments. Then she poked her head from out her "refuge" and spontaneously showed interest: "Yes, I play the piano and I have danced, too".

"The joy of playing the piano with the group and singing together with them has awakened her dormant creative potential and gives her courage to continue on her embarked path out of isolation."

Antonio Esperti, music and art therapist at the University Hospital of Lausanne.

The first important step from out of her barricade into the music therapy group had been taken. Marie began to actively participate in the workshop. When playing the piano and singing with the group she opened up and developed a new dynamism in the exchange with others. The music therapy sessions gave her the possibility of distracting her from her everyday worries and to return to her former strengths and to that which she really wished. Slowly the rebellious side of her that had rejected everything and everyone receded into the background and made way for a more cooperative attitude capable of having a relationship. She has begun to expose herself, to accept responsibility for herself and for the hospital team and can thus increasingly accept her body and the therapy goals.

Aaron, 6 years old: Operation successful, patient satisfied!

Aaron proudly shows his mother his drawings. One of them he did before and one after the operation on his tonsils. This was carried out without any complications and today the little scamp can go home.

Whether for relatively trouble-free surgery such as Aaron's or for a difficult operation, a stay in hospital is associated with many questions for small patients, behind which real fears can also be concealed that lead to stress and even to serious complications. Many children cannot speak about the fear caused by the unfamiliar surroundings, the physicians and health-care personnel with their instruments, and the uncertainty of what happens to them during anaesthesia and the operation. During the art therapy session on the day before the operation, they express their impressions and feelings on drawing paper and often with the therapist too, who has an important role as a contact person outside the family or medical environment. This possibility of expressing themselves freely and naturally helps to alleviate fears - an important step in the healing process.



Also after the operation many associated emotions flow into the creative work, and these will initiate discussions that help to align and process the hospital experience, so that in the end the positive feelings predominate.

Aaron, who does not draw at home very often and is not fond of drawing, resolutely picked up the felt tip pens offered to him in his hospital bed, glad of the possibility of expressing in his own way what he, who outwardly appeared brave and unconcerned, could not put into words.

"More important than what one says, is what one does, what happens to the child in such exceptional situations."
Corinna Mühlbauer, art therapist

Your donation helps to heal!

For many children the stay in hospital is associated with suffering and fears that they often cannot talk about. Painting, playing music, dancing and role play helps them with this and accelerates convalescence.

Please help to make these practical and effective therapies possible. Donations to the charitable ART-THERAPIE foundation are tax-deductible. Contributions of 50 francs and more will be acknowledged with thanks in writing.

Heartfelt thanks!

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