



## Helping children to cope with cancer

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4 May 2007, Research by Loughborough University into the information needs of children of cancer patients could help young people learn how to cope with the emotional turmoil of having a sick parent.

PhD student Suzanie Adlina Mat Saat, who is based in the University's Department of Information Science, was inspired to conduct the research after joining the National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM) as Marketing Manager.

While working at the NCSM, Suzanie noticed that many cancer patients who visited its Resource and Wellness Centre in Kuala Lumpur would bring their children along. She soon discovered that there was a lack of support material for children of cancer patients, and that they were often the least informed when it came to sickness in the family – particularly when it concerned their parents.

She said: "Many parents are so concerned about their own health needs that they unknowingly push their children aside. Many also want to shield their loved ones from fear or hurt, but this can be very harmful to children.

"Children can begin to blame themselves about their parent's illness, or feel resentment towards their mother or father for pushing them away. In some cases children can develop a dislike of hospitals or doctors because they associate them with their parent becoming sick."

To try and bridge the information gap Suzanie is carrying out a survey of cancer patients with young children in Malaysia. This will involve working with both the parents and the children to explore a number of innovative information solutions.

It is hoped the findings of the survey will help her to develop more material for children that can be used to explain to them about cancer, both in Malaysia and across the world.

She added: "I want to contact as many people as possible in Malaysia who have experienced cancer and who have children. I want them to contribute to the project so that the end result will be able to reach out to provide the much needed support for children everywhere."

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