

# Finding Hope for a Rare Condition

After being told you might lose a limb, discovering hope is the light at the end of the tunnel that every patient dreams of. A patient shares the journey that eventually led her to seek treatment in Singapore.



Featuring  
**Dr Saminathan Suresh Nathan**  
Orthopaedic Surgeon  
@ Mount Elizabeth Hospital

**W**HEN Indah Melati Setiawan first felt an unusual pain in her left thigh in March 2009, she could never have imagined that it would eventually turn out to be diagnosed as Ewing's sarcoma, a very rare bone cancer that can cause unrelenting bone pain bad enough to disturb sleep and lead to fractures. "The pain became a familiar part of my days. Every night, it was like being pricked by thousands of needles, with my whole body drenched in sweat. It was getting more and more difficult for me to walk," shared Indah.

## The Search for Treatment

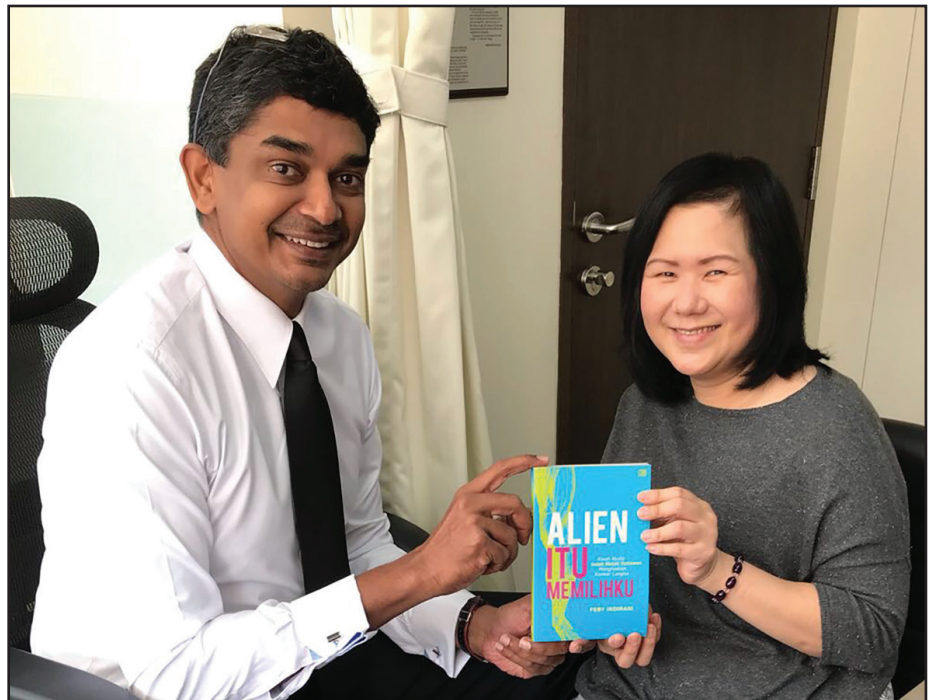
Due to the rarity of this disease, Indah could only turn to the Internet as a source of information. Her sister, Linda, helped to search online resources, and her efforts to turn up a reliable and recommended doctor specialising in treating sarcomas led them straight to Dr Suresh Nathan, an orthopaedic surgeon specialising in musculoskeletal tumours and limb reconstruction at Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

In addition to the positive information and feedback on Dr Suresh online, Indah also felt confident about seeking treatment in Singapore due to its reputation as a top healthcare destination. "To me, healthcare in Singapore is one of the best in Asia. It's one of the most developed countries there, and most of the doctors in the hospitals are highly trained and have years of experience providing medical and surgical treatments," explained Indah.

## Taking a Team Approach

Indah's confidence in Dr Suresh turned out to be well-placed, as he is experienced in the fields of musculoskeletal oncology, limb salvage and revision arthroplasty, and has to date performed some of the most complicated sarcoma resections in Singapore. His involvement with research and being privy to a number of early studies that showed it was possible to salvage such fractured tumours with attention to specific techniques, enabled him to conclude that it would be possible to salvage her leg, even though other doctors before him had recommended amputation through the pelvis.

Indah's emergency surgery took place on the New Year's eve of 2010, and saw Dr Suresh operating through the night well into 2011. She was able to stand a week after the surgery. This was eventually followed by chemotherapy and radiation, under the supervision of medical oncologist Dr Khoo Kei Siong, and three further procedures to her chest



to remove lung nodules. As Indah's cancer had spread to cause a large tumour on her chest wall, Dr Suresh also worked closely with chest surgeon Dr Thirugnanam Agasthian to successfully patch the hole in Indah's chest with biological mesh.

## Dedication Above and Beyond

After the surgery, Dr Suresh continued to play a key role in Indah's follow up treatment. "He would come personally on weekends to help me walk again. When I felt discouraged and did not want to get up, he would carry me out of bed!" shared Indah. Even after she returned to Indonesia, Dr Suresh's involvement did not wane - he stayed in touch with her via WhatsApp and provided very specific therapy instructions to her family members, as well as working with physiotherapists in Indonesia. The total recovery process after the surgery took about one year, and to this day Indah feels she would not have made it through as well as she did if not for Dr Suresh's patience and care.

Even up till today, he continues to be the main doctor monitoring Indah's condition with scans and follow ups, and coordinating her care with other specialists. "He is always getting new technologies in his clinic, and has recently purchased a new magnetic field device to help me with lymphoedema control in my leg and to help other patients as well," said Indah,

who now considers Dr Suresh more a friend than just a doctor.

She added, "Finding Dr Suresh was my first glimmer of hope, which led me to a strong team of doctors at Mount Elizabeth. They all played different but equally important roles throughout the course of my treatment journey."

Her advice for those seeking treatment options? "Choose a doctor with experience, and someone you're comfortable with. Make sure your destination is both safe and comfortable - Singapore is a great choice as everything is easy, whether it's communication or transport. I had a wonderful experience with Mount Elizabeth as the concierge staff were very helpful, it was clean and modern, and all the staff were extremely capable!"

Call us to secure an appointment with a specialist within 48 hours.

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