

Celebrating the bravery of young survivors

- Special Correspondent



saluting the superheroes: Children and parents at a function to honour patients at the Kanchi Kamakoti CHILDS Trust Hospital —Photo: S.R. Raghunathan

Six-year-old Akshaya was playing in the puja room of her home with matches when her night dress caught fire. “She tried to put it out by herself, but when she couldn’t, she ran out screaming,” said V. Manikandan, Akshaya’s father, a Professor at Vivekananda College.

“I came out of the bedroom, tore her dress with my hands and poured water on her — I thought I had put it out,” he said. But Akshaya had 40 per cent burns and spent a month at Kanchi Kamakoti CHILDS Trust Hospital.

On Saturday afternoon, Akshaya was one of over a dozen children, sporting T-shirts with superhero logos, whom the hospital honoured as ‘superheroes of the ICU’ for their grit and courage in battling serious illnesses in the paediatric intensive care unit of the hospital, and emerging healthy.

Describing the family’s experience, Mr. Manikandan spoke about the efforts the doctors, nurses and other staff made, the importance given to the parents’ emotions and the care his daughter was given. Akshaya is back in school, a happy Class II student.

The paediatric ICU of the hospital, first set up in 1991 and expanded to 17 beds in 2004, treats about 1,400 children every year from all over the country, said Bala Ramachandran, medical director of the hospital.

He also talked about the transport services to bring patients to the hospital that help provide care when the patients need it, and their teaching programme, which is now one of the largest in India. “Ninety per cent of the children get better. The challenge is to give high quality care while keeping it affordable,” he said.

Speaking of the immense gratification and joy they got seeing ill children get better, consultant doctors of the ICU said these were the best moments of their lives.

Selfless service

Ashok Kumar Mehta, chairman, Jain Housing & Constructions, who was the chief guest, spoke of the hospital staff’s selfless service and also of his association with medicine with the Jain Medical Relief Society. K. Mathangi Ramakrishnan, chairman, The CHILDS Trust Medical Research Foundation, also participated. Balloons popped, an upcoming magic show and games were announced and children, who had braved life-threatening illnesses, peeked into their goody bags.

Over a dozen children were honoured as ‘Superheroes of the ICU’ for their courage in battling illnesses



