



Beaming with happiness...
Mr and Mrs Tran Van Ngu with their twins and
Dr Cheng Tai Kin (right)

**“ We are very
impressed by
the professionalism
of the doctors
and nurses at
Parkway East Hospital.
Thank you all
for taking care of
our babies. ”**

~Tran Van Ngu~

DOUBLE HAPPINESS

as Premature Twins Recover

Normally, the birth of a first child would be a joyous event, and for Mr and Mrs Tran Van Ngu who were expecting not one but two babies - a pair of twins, their joy and pride knew no bounds. However for Mrs Tran, her pregnancy turned out to be an eventful one - at just 29 weeks and four days after conceiving the babies through an in-vitro fertilisation programme, she discovered that her amniotic sac was leaking fluid and she had to be rushed to the hospital for an emergency Caesarean delivery, resulting in her twin boys being born nine weeks premature in Vietnam.

Both babies - Tran Duc Minh and Tran Duc Dung, were fighting for survival at birth. Weighing between 1.2kg and 1.3kg, they were very weak as some of their organs, especially the lungs, were not fully developed. On the third day of their life, they had to be put on respiratory machines as they were grasping for their breath. Both babies had Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS). Baby Dung's was more severe and he needed to be intubated. Both Mr and Mrs Tran Van Ngu were helpless and could only watch them from afar struggling for their lives. They were told by their paediatrician that nothing much could be done, and their chances of survival was less than 10 percent.

Fortunately, through the help of another doctor, they learnt that there was a similar case that had been flown to Singapore and successfully treated two years ago. After much research and serious deliberations, Mr and Mrs Tran Van Ngu finally decided to fly the twins over to Singapore's Parkway East Hospital for medical treatment. Special arrangement was made for the twins to be evacuated on 21 September 2009, with the assistance and company of an experienced team of medical staff - comprising two paediatricians, Dr Cheng Tai Kin and Dr Lim Kwang Hsien and two nurses - from Parkway East Hospital.

Baby Minh needed ventilatory support through continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) for the air ambulance transfer; while Baby Dung who had the more severe respiratory disease needed to be re-intubated by Dr Cheng and ventilated in the hospital prior to the four-hour flight in the air ambulance to Singapore.

In Singapore, both babies were immediately placed on ventilator support, and underwent numerous rounds of tests. They were eventually diagnosed to be suffering from Apnoea of Prematurity (AOP). This results in pauses in breathing that can last 20 seconds or more. Caused by immature respiratory centres in the brain (the brain is not able to remind the lungs to breathe on a regular basis), apnoea is a very common problem in babies born early, said the twins' paediatrician, Dr Cheng Tai Kin. Warded in the Neonatology Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for almost three months, the twins were put on oral caffeine as a respiratory stimulant, and special nutrition containing vitamins and iron supplements were prescribed. Besides AOP, both babies also had small Persistent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) that closed spontaneously.

Under the expert care and close supervision of Dr Cheng and the nurses in the NICU, both the babies' health improved significantly, and so did their appetite. From being severely underweight, they have grown to a healthy weight of 3.27kg and 2.87kg respectively. "They are able to drink (milk) better now, and their mother can fully breastfeed them to give them the necessary nutrients," says Dr Cheng. He adds that the twins will need regular follow-ups for several years to monitor their growth and development, as well as their eyesight and hearing after they return to Vietnam.

Mr and Mrs Tran Van Ngu are very grateful to Dr Cheng and the nurses who took great care of the twins. "We are very impressed by the professionalism of the doctors and nurses at Parkway East Hospital for taking care of our babies. Dr Cheng provided peace of mind to us in our (lowest) times of need - besides patiently explaining Minh and Dung's conditions and providing comfort during the three-month period, he also shared with us the estimated bill size and length of their stay in the hospital. The nurses were very friendly and helpful when we needed help in tending to our babies. We were lucky too to have a good interpreter who was constantly around to communicate our needs to the doctor and nurses," shares a grateful Mr Tran Van Ngu.



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