

the children's hospital at Westmead

media release

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Laughter is the best medicine!

10 years of bringing smiles and laughter to the patients at The Children's Hospital at Westmead

Patients and staff are at high risk of infection, and it's cheerfully contagious. Laughter is expected to spread quickly as Clown Doctors™ celebrate 10 years at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, tickling funny bones and dosing sick children with medicine of a different kind....fun and laughter!

Young patients, their families, staff and supporters will join madcap 'medics' including Dr Colourfool, Dr Twang, Dr Sniggles, and Dr S Duffer to celebrate with fun, frivolity and of course, a birthday cake at **11am on Wednesday 22nd April 2009.**

"A smile, a laugh, and a moment of fun can help children cope better with hospital and escape from their illness for a few moments. Clown Doctors can help worried and stressed families share fun and laughter,' said co-founder and Creative Director Jean-Paul Bell. "The Clown Doctors are highly skilled professional performers, trained to work in the sensitive hospital setting, who help to lighten the serious side of hospital, relieve anxiety and stress and help recovery."

Just imagine lying in bed after heart surgery, or being diagnosed with cancer. These madcap Clown Doctors enter your room and with lots of jokes and tricks up their sleeves (and in their many pockets) - they get you really smiling and laughing. They can't cure what's wrong with you, but they certainly make you feel better. Every day in hospitals all around the country, this is what the Clown Doctors do.

"The Clown Doctors really make a valuable contribution to The Hospital, bringing laughter not only to our young patients, but also their families and staff." said Dr Tony Penna, Chief Executive of The Children's Hospital at Westmead. "Whilst as doctors we focus on the physical well-being of our patients, these talented performers help us look after the emotional well-being of our patients. Totally funded by the Humour Foundation, this service is donated to the Hospital and we are extremely grateful to the Humour Foundation and their sponsors and supporters. "

"Laughter has so many health benefits", said Dr Peter Spitzer, Medical Director and Co-founder of the The Humour Foundation. "Laughter not only helps people cope with difficult situations, but also has a positive effect on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, similar to exercise, and relaxes the muscles, helps the immune system, reduces pain and stress, as well as helping to promote a positive outlook."

Clown Doctors have been dosing patients with fun and laughter since 1997. They treat patients in children's and general hospitals around Australia. Clown Doctors is the core program of The Humour Foundation, a national charity promoting and delivering the health benefits of humour. The Humour Foundation relies solely on community and corporate support to keep Clown Doctors at the bedside of sick children. The Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund is Founding Partner, Cadbury is Principle Partner and both BIG4 Holiday Parks & Marriott Hotels and Resorts are Key Partners to The Humour Foundation. For more information visit www.humourfoundation.com.au

The Children's Hospital at Westmead is the largest paediatric centre in NSW, providing the most advanced care and treatment options for children from NSW, Australia and across the Pacific Rim.

Established in 1880, *The Children's Hospital at Westmead* is a stand-alone public Hospital and registered charity with 3,000 staff working in 150 departments. Over 60,000 sick children and their families are cared for each year in a family-focused, healing environment.

Funded by the NSW Government, *The Children's Hospital at Westmead* provides significant enhancements to services aided by the generosity of individual and corporate donors. For more information visit www.chw.edu.au

Media Opportunity: 11am Wednesday 22nd April 2009

The Children's Hospital at Westmead

The Function Room Level 1 Corner of Hawkesbury Road and Hainsworth Street, Westmead

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