

PRESS RELEASE

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The Yi Fan Story

Compared to most children, four-year-old Yi Fan's Christmas wish isn't much. All she wants is a chance to learn how to roller skate, go to school, and make some friends. Born with severe lung disease, she's never been able to live a normal life, going in and out of hospitals, for painful treatments, and never being able to go far from her supply of oxygen.



But despite her pain and frustrations, Yi Fan, who lives in Beijing, has never given up on life and brings her parents nothing but joy. Now they are desperate for help to save her life.

Yi Fan, who turns five this Christmas, may not see her 6th birthday unless her parents, Jack Pan and Ping Zhou, can raise \$300,000 - \$500,000 to send their little girl to see some of the best specialists in the world. Refusing to give up on their only child, Jack and Ping have already sold their home to fund Yi Fan's medical costs. Now, time is running out and they are willing to do anything to give their daughter a chance of life.

Her Beijing-based international doctor, Steven Alexander, believes that if he can get her to the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, one of the top children's hospitals in the world, they may be able to help her. The doctors there use new medical technologies and have experience with cases like Yi Fan's, experience which is nearly impossible to find elsewhere. "They've exhausted all the diagnostic and therapeutic means here in China," said Dr Alexander, a specialist in intensive care medicine trained at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. "She will most certainly die in the next 12 to 18 months without a more extensive evaluation. Her actual diagnosis will become a moot point and her only therapy may be a pediatric lung transplant. To my knowledge, such a procedure has not yet been successfully carried out in China."

Over the last 5 years, Texas Children's has performed the most pediatric lung transplants in the world and, once on the list, a patient usually receives a transplant within 60 days. For these reasons, Yi Fan's parents believe this is the best place to send their child. "All Yi Fan wants is a chance to wear beautiful roller skates, to dance and to go out to school like all the other children," said her 31-year-old mother Ping. "Every time we go to the hospital for injections, we encourage her to be brave and she is such a strong girl, she always is. When

she hears the other children crying, she doesn't join in. She stays brave and says to herself: 'I am the best'".

Her father, also 31, says that although his little girl has never been able to attend playgroups or pre-school because of her health, she works hard to learn things at home. "At three years old, she had already memorized a lot of Chinese ancient poetry," he said. "With God's help, we pray that one day she will be able to go to school every morning, just like all the other children."



Her parents moved to Beijing 10 years ago from Guizhou and Heilongjiang provinces to look for work. But after Yi Fan's lung problems became clear, Ping had to give up her promising career in graphic design. "On the second day she came into this world, she was sent to the intensive care unit of the hospital," said Jack. "After 15 days of treatment, we went home with the hope of beginning a wonderful new life. But just one year and two months later, she had to go to hospital again with pneumonia and things went from bad to worse. After 18 days of treatment, the hospital gave up on her and told us there was nothing they could do. When she came home, her voice was so hoarse, we could only see her mouth crying but couldn't hear the slightest sound."

Selling their home, the Pan's managed to raise enough money to buy an oxygen machine to help Yi Fan's depleted lungs supply her body with enough oxygen. Their daughter never gave up and struggled on, eventually learning to walk at the age of three. But as she grew and her body made more demands of her lungs, her condition deteriorated and without the oxygen mask, she could not breathe, let alone walk. Since then, she has not been able to be more than 3 meters from the oxygen machine. Her whole life revolves around books and television. Her friends come from cartoons.

Dr Alexander has already been able to improve Yi Fan's quality of life with new drugs but he believes that if he can get her to the experienced specialists in the United States they can do so much more. If Yi Fan does need a lung transplant, statistics show that 50% of children survive to 5 years with 25 % surviving to 15 years or beyond. "I've seen thousands of very sick children during my career," he said. "But there is just something about this little girl which moves me. Her father told me that when Yi Fan saw the crying children in the Sichuan earthquake last year, Yi Fan told her father to send her own savings to help. I just thought; What amazing love from one so small."

The United Foundation for Children's Health, a nonprofit organization which helps to provide health care to children with special medical needs, has set up this fund to collect donations for Yi Fan.

www.yifanfund.com