Sometimes, the sickest twin knows it’s poorly and makes the noblest sacrifice to save the other. That is what Leo did. He became Oska’s guardian angel and saved his life. Now a charity has been established in his memory.

Monday 18 February, 2019

New Year’s Day 2015, a day which would change the course of our lives forever. After a very normal and healthy twin pregnancy, my waters started to break. I was only 21 weeks pregnant.
Thankfully both our boys stayed put, but a few weeks later I was diagnosed with an infection which could cause a miscarriage, premature birth or neonatal death. At just 24 weeks, after several days of bedrest, I went into labour at University Hospital of North Tees and Leo was born at 7.42pm on 19 January 2015. Our baby was rushed up to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in a bid to save his life, but he was too sick. I wasn’t allowed off the bed in case I delivered Oska and he needed to stay safely in there for as long as possible. In the early hours of the next morning the doctors told us they had done all they could to save Leo and we made the heart-breaking decision to turn of his life support machine and let him go peacefully.
I was still pregnant with Oska and knew that every hour inside gave him a stronger chance of survival. It was another four days before Oska was born, weighing only 890g. Although he was seriously ill, the doctors were able to successfully intubate him and transfer him up to NICU, which is where he spent the next four months of his life growing stronger before being discharged home.
The winter after we took him home that things started to go wrong for Oska. It was December and he wasn’t breathing very well. Concerned, we rushed him to hospital. Once there he deteriorated quickly and, all too soon, he was blue-lighted across to Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle upon Tyne in a bid to save his life. We were terrified.
The day after being transferred, a nurse on the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) called Crawford House to see if they had a room available where my family could stay. Crawford House is free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation located within the hospital grounds run by a charity called The Sick Children’s Trust, amazingly we were offered a place to stay straight away. Initially my partner and older son, Dax, stayed at home. It was a just few days before Christmas and we wanted to keep things as ‘normal’ as possible for Dax, plus we hoped Oska’s condition would improve quickly.
Sadly, things didn’t go to plan and, in the early hours of 23 December, the phone in my bedroom at Crawford House rang. Oska had gone into cardiac arrest. Thankfully I was so close to the hospital that I was able to sprint across the car park and be by his side in minutes. With Oska teetering on the brink between life and death, my partner and Dax moved into Crawford House with me – we needed to be together as a family. My Mum and Stepdad brought all the boys’ presents up from Yarm and we hid them in the wardrobe of our bedroom and prepared for a Christmas miles away from home.
Dax was only a little boy and, in a bid to make Christmas as festive as normal, we tried to remain positive. Oska was still very poorly, but at least we were together and had the facilities at Crawford House available to us. We were able to cook proper meals in the large kitchen, accommodate visits from our friends and family, and keep Dax entertained. He loved the football table and the playroom and was spoilt by the staff working in the house. They were very supportive and always asked us how Oska was doing and were genuinely interested in his progress. It really felt like they cared about how we were all coping and nothing ever seemed like too much trouble. The house was a wonderful escape from time spent on the ward and the Christmas tree and decorations lifted our spirits.
Luckily, after several long weeks, Oska, who is now four years old, recovered and was discharged home. Since then, however, we have had several more PICU admissions, but fortunately we have been able to stay at Crawford House each time. I don’t know how I could have coped if I had been any further away from Oska. He has needed his family there alongside him to help him overcome every hurdle.
My traumatic experiences in hospital both before and after giving birth have led me to set up a new charity, called Leo’s, in my son’s memory. The charity’s mission is to support and care for all those affected by premature or traumatic birth and raise awareness of babies needing NICU stays and the effects this can have on mental health. We are grateful that The Sick Children’s Trust is supporting Neonatal Mental Health Awareness Week in April and hope that it isn’t long before the impact of the campaign is felt nationwide.

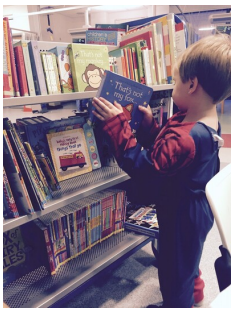
Lottie King, Dax, Leo and Oska Feasey’s Mum.

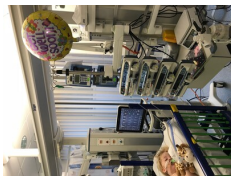
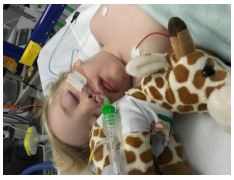
For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

For further information about Leo's, please visit
http://www.leosneonatal.org/

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About The Sick Children’s Trust

The Sick Children’s Trust is working to a future where every family with a seriously ill child in hospital will be able to stay together, just minutes from their child’s bed during their treatment.

We believe keeping families together significantly improves the recovery of seriously ill children. We provide free, high-quality ‘Home from Home’ accommodation, as well as emotional and practical support, to families with sick children in hospital in the UK.

The Sick Children’s Trust was founded in 1982 by two paediatric specialists Dr Jon Pritchard and Professor James Malpas. Today we have ten ‘Homes from Home’ at major hospitals around the country where families can stay free of charge, for as long as they need whilst their child is undergoing treatment.

We support around 4,000 families every year, and there is a growing demand for our ‘Homes from Home’ as children must increasingly travel long distances to get the specialist treatment they need.

Related Keywords:

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