

Ane's Story

Annamart Coetsee

Our baby daughter Ané-Mari Coetsee was born on 19 January 2006 in Qatar in the Middle East. We noticed from the start that her right eye lid was drooping. We were told that it is nothing and that lots of people have a “lazy” eye. At six weeks this “lazy” eye was diagnosed as Horner’s Syndrome.

At eight weeks Ané’s right arm started swelling uncontrollably and without reason. Eventually on 13 April 2006 she was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma Stage 4. At this stage the cancer had already spread to her bone marrow and lymph glands. We were absolutely devastated.

On 17 April 2006, 2 days before she was 3 months old, pediatric surgeons operated on her to remove the massive malignant tumour measuring 18 X 9 X 4 cm. The operation took almost 6,5 hrs. During the operation her right lung collapsed. Two weeks after the operation we moved back to South Africa, as we wanted Ané to be treated by the wonderful team of pediatric oncologists at Johannesburg General.

On 5 May 2006 Ané was operated on again, this time in South Africa, to insert a port in her left chest area through which the chemotherapy was to be administered. She started her first chemo treatment on 15 May 2006. The chemotherapy was so strong and such a shock to her little body that she became terribly terribly ill. She stopped drinking completely and some days we were lucky if she drank 40ml of her milk in 24 hrs. She lost a huge amount of weight and contracted pneumonia. She developed horrible sores in her mouth and had a terrible nappy rash from the chemo. She was vomiting a lot and still refusing to drink. She remained in hospital for 16 days.

While still in hospital with Ané I saw an Annique programme on SABC 2. I was referred to Anju Blackbeard. The happenings of that day changed Ané’s little life. Anju recommended that I start giving Ané Annique’s Baby Rooibos tea immediately. Ané loved the tea mixed with her milk. She started drinking again little by little, doing better each day. We also applied the Rooibostea to her nappy rash and a huge improvement could be seen after a few days.

At the same time Anju also showed me basic Baby Massage. As a result of the chemotherapy Ané was extremely swollen and the soles of her feet appeared charcoal greyish. The moment we started massaging her, her condition started improving; she became more lively and active and was drinking better than ever before.

After the first chemo when Ané became so terribly ill, she started having problems with her oxygen saturation. She became very blue in the face and had a lot of trouble breathing. Her breathing rate was way too fast and shallow and she was grunting most of the time. The doctors discovered that her right diaphragm was paralyzed resulting in her right lung not being able to expand. This also caused her liver to move up into her chest cavity. To correct this Ané was operated on again on 22 July 2006.

Since we started with the Annique Baby Rooibostea and the Baby Massaging and Baby Gym Ané has had 4 more chemo therapy treatments. During these chemo sessions she never stopped drinking completely again. During the 3,5 months that she has been receiving chemo she has picked up 1,4kg.

Ané is now a busy, playful, talkative 7,5 month old baby. During her previous chemo session she started sitting by herself and rolling from her stomach onto her back.

Last week we received the spectacular news that Ané's bone marrow and bones are clear of any cancer! We thank God for that every day!

Annique Baby Rooibostea and Baby Gym by Dr Melodie de Jager and Ansju Blacbeard's compassion and dedication saved our little girl's life!!

Ansju did not only help us with Annique and Baby Gym, she became a treasured friend who, as a mom of two little girls, treated us with compassion and love. She was never in a hurry and often just talking to her straightened my mind through those very bad early chemo periods.

Ansju's knowledge always astounds me. She is totally committed, dedicated and passionate about her work.

We are eternally grateful to everybody involved in helping Ané through her healing process!